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MISREPRESENTATION.

VOL. II.

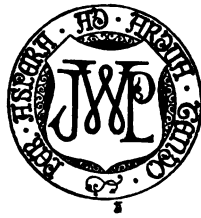
MISREPRESENTATION

A NOVEL

BY

ANNA H. DRURY

AUTHOR OF 'FRIENDS AND FORTUNE' ETC. .



IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

LONDON

JOHN W. PARKER AND SON WEST STRAND

1859

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MISREPRESENTATION.

CHAPTER I.

Dear babe, thou daughter of another,
One moment let me be thy mother !
An infant's face and looks are thine,
And sure a mother's heart is mine.

WORDSWORTH.

A POSTCHaise rattled through Cannymoor just as the church clock was striking nine. It was a fine calm night, and a bright moon.

'I hope Mr. Randolph gave my message,' said Henry, 'or the good people will have had time to be dreadfully uneasy ; and nothing is more disagreeable on first arriving, than to be received with a scene. Do you feel your courage oozing out, Emma, now you have got your wish gratified ?'

'Do not say it was my wish, Harry. You crushed that at the onset, and this is entirely your own affair, and I am come only to please you. How sweet and fresh the night air is ! It will not hurt baby, I hope. Do you think they will be pleased to see her ?'

'If I did not think so, I should be apt to turn round and go back again. But to set your mind at rest on that score, I may as well tell you that it was only because my cousin Penélope wrote to request me to do so, that I proposed coming at all.'

‘Why did you not tell me that sooner? I should have been spared a great deal of conjecture and doubt. And why did she not invite you openly, instead of asking you to invite yourself?’

‘Family mysteries, my love. You will meet with more before you have done, I dare say. Pray do not forget all the grand manœuvres you had planned against we came, which were to work such wonders.’

‘Ah, I have thought better of that,’ said Emma, with a smile. ‘To tell you the honest truth, if I had formed twenty schemes of the kind, now it is come to the point, I do not feel bold enough for one.’

They were now passing under the trees of the Manor-house, and the cheerful lights gleaming from the windows spoke of hospitable welcome. Emma could not help expressing her delight.

‘A real, old-fashioned country-house, just what I have so often wished to see! How fond you must be of the dear old place, Harry!’

‘Humph!’ muttered Henry, as he put his head out to direct the post-boy; ‘it is little good it has ever done *me*, or seems likely to do.’

In another minute they were at the door. A glowing welcome greeted them, and Emma speedily found herself being passed from one to another, with the liveliest expressions of affection, and kindest reproaches for having so long deferred her visit. She wondered at it now herself, since Harry’s uncle and cousins were such kind, hospitable people; and her frank pleasure at her reception, and undisguised admiration of the house, as she was conducted to the rooms prepared for themselves and the child, quite won Penelope’s favour, and nearly melted Lucy into tears. They were the

least in the world afraid of the baby, and Lucy's feeble attempts to take hold of it were of so unorthodox a fashion, that the small nurserymaid, who adored her charge next to her mistress, looked ready to cry too, and resisted stoutly. Luckily, it was time for the little guest to be in bed, and Emma was soon hurried down to supper—an apology being made *en route* for Mrs. Lyndon, who, for fear of excitement, had been coaxed to retire early.

On entering the dining-room, she perceived Henry standing near the fire, talking to a tall, elegant lady in mourning, and had just time to feel instinctively who this was, when he came forward, and said, 'Emma, let me introduce you to Lady Adelaide;' and she found herself being courteously addressed in what seemed to her one of the softest voices she ever heard. At first she was so taken up with recalling all she had been told and all she had thought of the speaker, that the polite inquiries and remarks fell on her ear without much effect, and were but mechanically answered. When, however, Henry moved away to speak to his cousins, and Lady Adelaide, following him with her eyes, said a few warm grateful words about all she owed to his long-tried kindness and friendship, Emma's senses came back directly, and she looked up in her face with eager interest and good-will. These were by no means diminished on observing, as no one could help doing that night, how pale and worn that face was; how forced were her attempts to join in the general conversation, still more in the meal—though Lucy reminded her piteously that she had eaten no dinner, and would infallibly faint before morning. Mr. Lyndon, on the contrary, to the great relief of his

daughters, appeared in the highest spirits; talked of all they could do to make Emma's visit agreeable—it was too early in the season for excursions, but they had plenty of kind neighbours, and Penelope must lose no time in persuading them to assist in amusing her. Penelope made no objection, but London ladies did not always appreciate their good neighbours as much as they did—they were not fashionable enough for some people. Emma persisted against the imputation of fashionable fastidiousness; and of the friendliness of the neighbourhood she had heard already from Mr. Randolph.

‘Ah, he came down part of the way with you. I am so glad he is come back; he is so gentlemanly and agreeable. How did you get acquainted with him?’

‘He had business in town,’ said Henry, ‘and brought me an introduction from Dr. Home.’

‘That was what took him off so suddenly, then. Cannymoor was almost in tears at his unexpected flight. I wonder the bells have not rung for his return. How far did he travel with you?’

‘As far as Lilford, and then, as the little one was fretful, we thought we had better rest a couple of hours, and he offered to come on here, and bring you word.’

Emma involuntarily glanced at Lady Adelaide, who was sitting opposite, listening attentively; but meeting her eyes, dropped her own in haste and some confusion. How she could ever have dreamed of winning the confidence, and championing the cause of so queenly a personage, was a wonder now to herself; and she only hoped Henry would keep her counsel, and never let her presumptuous designs slip out.

In fact, notwithstanding her utmost efforts, the more

Mr. Lyndon attempted to keep up the hilarity of the conversation, and to draw her to take a part in it, the more depressed grew Adelaide's wearied spirits; and the very self-control she exercised to preserve outward composure, gave a coldness to her manner that looked very like hauteur. Emma felt, as others had done, that those grand brilliant eyes looked upon her with a supreme indifference and superiority, as expressive of immeasurable distance as the ray of a fixed star. She was too much of a gentlewoman bred to be afraid of another because higher born; but she could not conceal from herself, that it would require more courage than she was aware of possessing, to make any advances of friendship to one so stately and proud.

In this impression she was confirmed by Penelope, who, unaware of the cause, felt peculiarly provoked with her sister-in-law for 'displaying airs,' as she said, 'just to show off before Mrs. Henry.' She took an early opportunity of apologizing to the latter, and explaining it was what they all had to put up with, more or less; it was only a little caprice of temper; and Emma wondered how any one could be out of temper with such kind and friendly relations. She said as much to her husband, when they compared notes on their mutual impressions; and received a doubtful grimace in return, that, as often happened, left her under the impression that she was not quite so wise as she had thought herself.

Emma rose early, too eager to realize the pleasure of being actually in the country to sleep late, even after the fatigues of the day before; and had time to strike up a brisk friendship with Walter before breakfast. He was frank and communicative—hoped cousin Henry

would put grandpapa into good humour, for it was high time ; told her he and his mamma were always up long before any one else, that they might read together, without having anybody to bother them ; aunts did bother so sometimes. Oh no, they had no family prayers—they had them at the rectory, though. This was not much consolation to Emma for the disappointment. She had pictured to herself Mr. Lyndon presiding over his household worship. However, she knew better than to let this appear ; and Walter, to whom it was no matter of regret, rattled on very much to her amusement, as well as her edification. He opened her eyes to many things she had no idea of : but, prepared to make the best of all, she presented so bright a face at the breakfast-table, that none of the party could help feeling its influence. It made a sunshine of the shadiest corners of the Manorhouse—abounding as it did in that article ; even poor Mrs. Lyndon was aware of something pleasant being added to the general stock ; and though in a great mist about her nephew's identity, calling him by every name except his own, but rather inclining to the belief that he was her cousin Thomas, from Newfoundland—soon began to turn her placid, puzzled face in the direction whence sounded that joyous laugh, so unlike anything she was in the habit of hearing, and to listen whenever Emma spoke, with a smile or nod of approval to her daughters. She was even roused sufficiently to call Penelope, as it were, aside, after breakfast, to beg her to be particular about the fish for dinner, as her cousin Thomas was so very partial to fish, he never dined without it. It was the reason of his going to Newfoundland, she believed—Thomas was so particularly partial to fish ! She was

very nearly working herself up into a flurry about it, when a happy diversion occurred in the shape of the baby, who came in to be admired, and who, taking umbrage at some affront unknown, allowed no voice but her own to be heard for the next half-hour. This business at last got over, Emma must be taken over the house, and shown all the treasures and heirlooms, and be instructed in the past glories of the family; in all which she took such hearty interest and pleasure, that her new relations were fairly won. By and by, just when she thought to go out, and 'realize the fact of being in the country' out of doors as well as in, the neighbours began to call; and so warm was the curiosity to see 'Mrs. Henry,' that one party had no sooner taken leave, than another came, till the best of the day was gone. Henry, who was entrapped by the first detachment, made a dexterous escape from the rest, and resigning his wife to her inevitable destiny, took a long, scrambling walk with Walter, the only one permitted to avoid the visitors. Much as he enjoyed the fresh air of the moors, with all the keen delight of a Londoner, he could not refrain from a burst of spleen as soon as he got back to the Manorhouse, at the ill-timed civility that had prevented Emma's sharing the pleasure. But this she would not allow; it was all friendly good-will, and to be received as such; the ladies, young and old, seemed so ready to welcome her, it was plain how much Harry and his relations were respected. If their manners were a little singular, it was all part of the pleasure of the country to see new phases of character. They had admired the baby, too, to her heart's content; and she was to see the schools, and be introduced to some of the poor people—real

cottagers, such as she had so often wished to visit ; and she had seen the rector—such a winning, kind old man—and in short, though not denying some of the sayings and doings in Cannymoor amused her, she could see nothing to find fault with, if she tried.

‘You have an angel’s own happy temper,’ was Henry’s compliment in reply ; upon which she stopped him to make a confession. One person she did not think she ever could be friends with—and that was Lady Adelaide.

‘Rather an early day to form such a judgment,’ suggested Henry.

‘Not when I see her, Harry, among all those good-natured people looking so reserved and silent—Mr. Lyndon watching her every minute, as if he was afraid of her doing something to affront them. It seemed to strike your cousin Penelope too, for she said she had never seen your uncle so anxious before ; he seems uneasy the moment she is out of his sight. Your cousin says she believes she really cannot help it—it is her nature, and she has many good points : but, Harry, all her beauty and grace would never make up to me for a cold, proud heart.’

‘Thank you for correcting me, my love,’ said Henry. ‘I was wrong—you are *not* an angel, but only a good, amiable woman, liable to make a mistake. I do not like you the worse for that—on the contrary.’

‘Now, Harry ! was it not yourself who first warned me of her peculiar temper ?’

‘I never said it was not, my love.’

‘Then where is my mistake ?’

‘You will stand a better chance of correcting it, if I leave it to yourself to discover.’

Emma pondered over this, as she always did over her husband's dry sayings ; and ashamed of her own hasty judgment, made two or three attempts in the course of the evening to draw Lady Adelaide into conversation. The answers were always to the purpose, well-bred, and sensible, and so far, superior to the general style of remark among her new acquaintance ; but Emma saw, or fancied she saw, that it was by an effort she fixed her attention, and that, on the first interruption, she relapsed into reverie. All her politeness could not veil the fact of her mind being full of something else ; and nothing so soon damps the zeal, as the dread of being wished away. Emma gave it up, and went to the piano, where, in spite of its being rather the worse for wear, she played and sang, not in first-rate style, but pleasantly enough to be agreeable ; took her turn to cut into the family rubber, with a happy unconsciousness of its perils, and thanks to her good cards, won golden opinions from Mr. Lyndon, her partner ; especially as she was as eager to win as he could be, and never relaxed her attention for a moment.

‘It is of no use,’ she said to her husband, at night. ‘I can make myself at home with all the others ; but Lady Adelaide reminds me so forcibly of Mr. Randolph’s story, I could never love her, if I lived with her a twelvemonth. I can understand now why he is so bitter.’

‘Do you know what she said to me of you, Emma, while you were at cards ?’

‘No. Did she think me very trifling and silly ?’

‘She would scarcely have told *me* so, if she did. She said you seemed to carry a bright atmosphere about

you, and saw everything through its medium. I am afraid I must add—except herself.’

‘I am very sorry, Harry, if I am wrong ; but what can I do?’

The house had been quiet some time, when Emma was awoke by the crying of her baby in the next room. She was by its bed in an instant, and tried to hush it off again, but without success. The child seemed suffering and unwell, and the young mother remembered with alarm, that she had been told there was no doctor within five miles. She did not like to disturb Henry, whose unaccustomed fatigue made him sleep sounder than usual ; her little maid knew rather less than herself, and was much more frightened ; she had seen enough to know that the Miss Lyndons’ notions touching infants were of the crudest order ; she felt something ought to be done immediately, but dreaded doing the wrong thing. How she longed to be at home again, with her own doctor ten doors off, and her mother ready to come at a moment’s notice, no tongue could tell ; but in the midst of her perplexity and distress, she heard a step in the passage. She opened the door in eager hope that it might be one of the servants ; it was Lady Adelaide.

The extreme surprise in Emma’s face made her begin to apologize more nervously than might have been expected from one so self-possessed ; it was a great liberty she had taken, but she had heard the baby crying, and could not rest till she knew what was the matter, and whether she could be of any use. She had had some little experience, and if she might be allowed—?

There was no resisting the genuine motherly sympathy, if Emma had wished so to do ; but she was only too grateful for the presence of a counsellor on whom she could rely ; and from the moment her baby was in Adelaide's arms, she forgot every word that had ever been breathed to her prejudice.

Fortunately, Adelaide understood both the evil and the cure, and had remedies and resources at hand. She was soon able to relieve the young mother's anxiety, cheering her as much by her manner as by her prompt, active measures ; till Emma could hardly believe it could be the same individual she had felt so much afraid of down-stairs. When, however, everything had been done that experience and tenderness could suggest, and there was nothing to do but to watch quietly as the relieved child dropped asleep, the hopeful expression that had lightened Emma's vague dread, gradually faded into one of such deep, thoughtful sadness, that the latter was seized with sudden terror. Leaning across the bed, on either side of which they were seated, she whispered, imploringly—if she thought the baby worse—or what ?

'Worse !' repeated Adelaide, surprised ; 'do you not see how quietly she is asleep ?'

'Yes, and I felt easy—but your look frightened me . . . Oh ! how cruel—how inconsiderate I am ! indeed, I had forgotten—and how could I forget ?'

It was no wonder that she should, in her own absorbing anxiety ; but not the less remorseful did she feel, when Adelaide, whose heart had been aching as if it would burst, ever since that infant came into the house, buried her face in its pillow—her tears gushing silently through her fingers, as she vainly endeavoured to keep

them back. The very noiselessness of her grief, mindful even then not to disturb their charge, moved Emma more than the most passionate vehemence would have done; and she longed to throw herself on her neck, entreat her pardon, and give her such comfort as sympathy and goodwill could bestow. But the necessity of remaining still obliged her to wait till Adelaide should regain composure, which was not long. She raised her head, softly smoothed the moistened pillow, and glanced deprecatingly at Emma, as if feeling apology to be due.

‘You must forgive me . . . I do not often behave like this . . . but perhaps you know, or can imagine—’

‘God comfort you!’ whispered Emma, holding out her hand. It was readily taken, and its warm pressure returned; a silent pledge of friendship and confidence, which neither would have lightly given—and neither ever violated.

The child slept on, and Adelaide pressed the tired mother to go back to her bed, and allow her to sit there and watch. If there was the least return of indisposition, of which she saw no likelihood, the nurse should call her directly. Emma resisted; why was Lady Adelaide to lose her rest?

‘My rest! I have hardly known what it is for weeks. I seem to have lost the faculty of sleep; and nothing will do me so much good—indeed, I am in earnest—as to stay quietly here, and watch this dear child. No; do not be afraid I shall give way again; it is the greatest comfort I can have.’

Her urgency overcame all scruples; the little nurse was ordered into bed, and her mistress returned to hers; where after making many resolutions to lie awake, or,

at any rate, to relieve guard in an hour or two, she slept the sound sleep of weariness till the sun was shining into her eyes. Starting up then, with a guilty feeling of negligence, the first glad sound she heard was her darling's voice, much too merry to admit of alarm; the skill of her doctress was amply justified by the result, and nothing remained of the past night's terrors, but the friend they had so unexpectedly made.

'What can you be studying so diligently, my love?' asked Henry, as he looked in before going down to breakfast, and saw her absorbed by a fragment of paper which the maid had picked up near the baby's bed. As she did not answer, he glanced over her shoulder, and there was a world of meaning in the pressure she gave his hand, as they read together the following stanzas, written in pencil, and bearing as their title, the single word,

'RAMAH.'

They tell me that I should not grieve
A loss so long gone by;
That blessings reft new blessings leave,
That should their place supply.
I cannot say it is not so,
To murmur may be sin;
But the grief was given long ago—
When will the rest begin?

I look upon my boy's bright face—
My heart warms to his smile;
But not the less that empty place
Lies cold within the while.
I see him bound o'er heath and sod,
Till all my pulses thrill;
But the little foot that never trod—
Oh! when will *that* be still?

All other things must suffer change,
However fair before ;
And hearts grow cold, and voices strange,
And love is love no more ;
The old home fire may quench its gleams,
The dearest friends forget ;
But the little face that haunts my dreams,
Has never altered yet !

It never smiles, it never speaks,
Its calm eyes rest on mine,
And softly, round the gentle cheeks,
The fair curls float and twine.
The placid look is never stirred
By restlessness or pain ;
And yet, how often have I heard
That wailing cry again !

Sometimes, when all are hushed in sleep,
And I awake alone,
I feel the tiny fingers creep,
And nestle in my own.
I listen to the low, faint breath,
Yet know it is not there :
O Memory ! thou art strong as death—
But far more hard to bear !

Emma looked up in her husband's face as she folded the paper ; and though neither said a word, they were of one mind on that subject from that moment.

CHAPTER II.

Her heart is but o'ercharged—she will recover.

SHAKESPEARE.

‘**A**ND so,’ said Dr. Home to his guest, ‘you are really bent on giving poor old Cannymoor a new school-house, and letting in all the new lights upon our dark understandings, are you, Maurice? Well, it is not for me to hinder you, or to deny we are rather in want of them. There is no better way to bring a blessing on your basket and your store than by giving God and his poor a liberal tenth. But hark ye, my fine fellow; it is rather the fashion in schools now-a-days to ignore the Bible and the Catechism, and to give the youngsters air-pumps and microscopes, and I don’t know-what-all instead. Now, an air-pump is a very good thing, and a very clever thing, in its way, and for its proper work; but all the pistons in the world will not drive foolishness out of the heart of a child, or the fear of God into it; and the best microscope that ever was made won’t show human nature its secret faults; and so, till they can, I am for keeping them in their own place, and not for putting them in that of another. Teach the lads and lasses as much as you please of the creation and its wonders;

but stick to the old ways of showing them the Creator ~~that~~; or it will be no better than a painted panorama ~~to~~ them, instead of the real world in which their work ~~must~~ be done. I have a little book here,' he added, taking down a small brown volume, well known to fame, 'which, modern as it is, deserves to stand up among the oldest and wisest for the weighty matter it holds in so little compass. I'll put a mark in a passage that struck me the other day, and which I should like all you theorists on education to lay to heart, showing the distinction between to *instruct* and to *educate*. The one puts in—the other draws out.* So now you may just put as much useful knowledge as you please, or can, into my poor children's brains, with all your steam-engines and forcing-pumps; and leave the drawing out of their inner life to the machinery of God and the Church.'

Willing as he was to believe in any amount of zeal in a good cause, it did rather puzzle the rector to see the amount of energy his friend threw into this. As he told them at the Manorhouse, one would suppose he was canvassing for a general election—galloping twice to Shareham and back in one day, to consult land-agents—calling on all the farmers and holders of land—poring over a map of the parish and surrounding property as if he were pricking off his longitude on a chart: he was so busy, there was no getting a word out of him. It remained to be seen how much they should all be the wiser for it in the end!

One thing Mr. Randolph had accomplished in the

* Trench, *On the Study of Words*.

short space of time that he had been thus occupied, which, with one unwilling exception, nobody had ever succeeded in doing before ; he had won the somewhat eccentric heart of Mr. Ousel. Whether it was some well-timed hints about singing classes, and concerts for the improvement of the operatives, in which original works might be introduced under the supervision of a man of taste, that had first prepossessed that gentleman in favour of the new school-house and lecture-room—certain it is that he entered into the scheme with enthusiasm, and willingly agreed to dispose of the necessary ground, which happened to be in his possession. The next step, though a very sudden one, was to discover that he and Maurice Randolph were kindred spirits, born under one star ; and our friend had no choice but to accept the proffered confidence and intimacy as cordially as he could, or affront the susceptible genius for ever. He preferred the former, and though the devotion of his musical Horatio was rather too rapid to be reciprocated quite as fast as it deserved, he proved himself no inefficient ally in more ways than one.

It was the fourth day of Henry's visit, as he failed not to remark—his days being very few, and proportionably to be valued. As far as any good to his uncle was concerned—the secret object for which he had come—he began to think he might as well have stayed at home. Mr. Lyndon evaded all attempts to draw him into conversation on his affairs ; his recent irritability had given place to a forced state of high spirits, which could not, however, conceal from those who knew him, that he was in a perpetual tremor of watchfulness and expectation ; starting at every unusual

sound, and turning red at the sudden entrance of a visitor. The only person who could have accounted for this, and who shared it in no small degree, was Lady Adelaide; and he was in a fever of uneasiness whenever she was out of his sight. So closely did he watch her movements, in the dread of her revealing the cause of his perturbation, that she could scarcely find a moment to speak to Henry alone, even on her own private affairs. An opportunity, however, occurred on the present afternoon. Mr. Lyndon, believing Henry meant to accompany his wife and Penelope to return the visits of the neighbours, had taken care to request Lady Adelaide would wait at home till his return from a short walk he had to take, on a little matter of business, when he should be glad of her arm for a stroll together. In this she, of course, acquiesced; and while she was walking up and down the lawn, Henry came and joined her.

‘I thought I should never have a word with you,’ he said, as he offered his arm. ‘You are in such request, it requires a little diplomacy to secure an audience. But I had better not allude to diplomacy—my own having proved such an utter failure, that I am afraid you cannot look at me with patience.’

‘Indeed, it was no fault of yours; you did all you could, and the failure was owing to a train of accidental circumstances against which no foresight could provide. I only regret you had so much trouble for nothing.’

‘Do not say for *nothing*; I have good hopes of recovering our lost ground, with a little patience and plain speaking. Lord Delaunay cannot stay abroad for ever, or if he does, there are ways and means of following him.

‘It will be of no use, Henry. It is not to be. So has it always been with every effort I have made. A kind friend in India undertook to plead my cause on his return, and I lived for months on that hope—he died on the passage home. One of my relations, who loved me from my infancy, and whom my mother loved dearly, made an earnest effort to accomplish the reconciliation: and just as she had persuaded her to pay her a visit, hoping that her personal entreaties and argument might prevail, she was seized with paralysis, and never spoke again. Every letter fails—every mediator is baffled. I accept my sentence, and will struggle against it no more.’

‘I am sorry to hear you speak like this,’ said Henry, kindly; ‘but if you despair for yourself, you must allow your friends to hope for you. One thing is very certain now, that your cousin, Miss Conway, is your enemy—and rather an awkward one to deal with. You cannot be too careful how you communicate with her at all. Excuse my saying that you are no match for her in this matter.’

‘Why should she be my enemy?’ said Adelaide, mournfully; ‘I never injured her when I had the power—and now I could not, if I would.’

‘She evidently thinks otherwise. She may have her own reasons for wishing to keep all your mother’s regard to herself.’

The bitter tears rushed to her eyes. ‘If that indeed be so, let her take all—all she wishes for; I would gladly give up every claim, every right, so I might but be allowed—’

She could not go on, but Henry understood. ‘On such terms she would probably consent, but you both

‘Oh, do not detain me!’ she said, still hurrying on. ‘You will drive him frantic by delay—it may risk his life. If you could but induce him to explain it all to you, you might save us both; but I have promised to be silent and to obey, and I must—I am coming, sir!’ for Mr. Lyndon’s impatient face at that moment appeared at the window, and his eager gesture showed how even this trifling delay had excited him. Directly he saw her approaching, however, he drew back, and signed her to follow. Not till they were alone in the hall, did he stop to speak. Then he turned, and took her by the hand.

‘My dear Adelaide, you know what you promised me—’

‘I promised to obey you, sir. I know you will ask nothing of me unworthy the name I bear—the honour committed to my charge. What am I to do?’

He hesitated—moved by the gentle dignity of her manner.

‘Why, I met Spindler just now, and he was all on the high horse, as I expected; but I talked him over, and asked him in as if nothing had happened: and—in short, he is in the library, where I left him, under pretence of finding his map that he left behind him; and I thought, if you were to go in now, in your own ladylike way, and try what you can do towards conciliating him, you might soon make him agree to some arrangement that would give us time to get rid of him altogether. You do not suppose,’ he added, hurriedly, with a forced smile, ‘that I wish you to put yourself in his power for a moment: I want you to have him in yours. I am sure no one could resist you that you were resolved to win.’

Lady Adelaide blushed over cheek and brow with indignant shame. She felt as if she should never look up again—as if the earth was not deep enough to hide her humiliation. Her downcast eyes and compressed lips betrayed the strong disapprobation respect would not allow her to express in words; and Mr. Lyndon, afraid he had gone too far, hastened to assure her he was only in jest—jesting, he could truly say, with a heavy heart: he never meant to wound her feelings; all he asked was that she would do what she could, the method he left to her own excellent sense and discretion. This was some relief, and she promised to do her best, and went at once to the library—lest her courage, like that of Acres, should ooze out by delay.

Her entrance was evidently unexpected by the unwelcome visitor; for as she opened the door, he started up, with a very red face, from a stooping posture, hustling into his pocket the folding-rule with which he had been taking the dimensions of the apartment. He looked peculiarly awkward at the detection, as well as on finding himself again in her presence after his recent ignominious dismissal; but while he was stammering over his bow and speech, she advanced towards him with that winning grace, which, Mr. Lyndon had truly said, was so difficult to resist.

‘Mr. Spindler, you were rather hard upon me the last time we met, and I was hasty towards you in return. Let us both admit as much, and forget on either side whatever would prevent your appearing in this house on the same friendly terms as before.’

He bowed two or three times while she was speaking, but paused before making a reply. The moment he found she was prepared to conciliate, his cunning took

the alarm. So proud as she was, there must be some plan to circumvent him in this sudden change, and he resolved to take up a strong position at once, and rake the enemy's line.

'Madam,' he began, rather stiffly, and with the tone of an injured man, 'that you admit you were hasty ought to be enough to satisfy any one. I am bound to be satisfied, and of course I am. I shall be happy to forget it all as soon as I can. It will depend upon your ladyship how soon that will be; this minute, if you will.'

He made a step forward with curved body and extended hand. Lady Adelaide's lips grew white, in spite of the iron with which she had strung her nerves; but she suffered him to touch the tips of her fingers without any visible shudder, and stood stately and erect as a statue. Her powers of conciliation would go no further. Mr. Spindler, however, needed very little re-assuring; he felt he had the advantage, and pursued it.

'Won't your ladyship sit down? We could talk then more at our ease. No?—rather not?—just as you please. Your ladyship's will must always be mine. I am to understand, then, you no longer resent my little scheme—eh, my lady—do you?'

'As you may suppose, sir, by my being here, I am at liberty to resent nothing.'

'Ah, true. You have found out that Abel Spindler is not a man to be sneered at—is he, my lady? And so you have thought better of it, and will not be so hard-hearted as you tried to make me believe?' added he, with softened gallantry.

Lady Adelaide kept her temper.

'I have thought certainly of what you said, sir, very seriously; it is, indeed a serious matter to me if any

resentment for my behaviour should be the means of dissolving your friendship with Mr. Lyndon ; but if you will allow us time—'

'Time? Oh, that's it, my lady? I was in too great a hurry to come to the point, I suppose? I am not used to the fashionable ways of arranging matters ; you must teach them to me by degrees. Certainly, I don't want to hurry you. Three months, four, five, or even six months, if you like ; a bill at such and such a date, with proper interest allowed, of course, in the way of civil speaking, and so forth, you know—you *take* me, my lady—eh? A little joke is no great offence among friends, eh?'

'No offence among friends, sir, certainly ; but I am afraid you mistake my meaning. No lapse of time could possibly affect the answer I gave you the other day. I allude to the subject once more, that it may be closed for ever. I should only be deceiving you were I to speak otherwise.'

'Then what on earth do you mean about wanting time?' cried he, snappishly.

'Time, sir, to defray all that is due to you, which we will do, if health and strength are given—'

'Oh, that's what you mean? That is what Mr. Lyndon sent you in to say, was it? He just feels he is in an awkward corner, and wants to get out of it with a few soft words. I am not to be managed quite so easily. We all know ladies protest they never mean to marry again, until they see a chance of a good settlement ; and so far as *that* goes, my lady—'

'Stop, sir ; I have told you I am in no position to resent your treatment. You can therefore no more insult than you could strike me.'

‘I don’t want to insult you; quite the contrary. I want our interests to be one, as I showed you; and since it is plain speaking you like, my Lady Adelaide Lyndon, I tell you, once for all, my mind is made up. Carry my point I *will*, if it cost me half I have in the world.’

She smiled in quiet scorn. He understood the smile, and it lashed his little soul into rage.

‘I know what that means—I know that contemptuous curl of the lip, my lady—I have seen it before. You think yourself of a superior race of beings to us, I know very well; but it strikes me, and may strike other people, that a man, who from seven shillings a-week (which was all I began life upon, in the warehouse of young Ousel’s grandfather), has saved, and worked, and scraped, and contrived, till he has realized a handsome fortune, and is looked up to and respected, and owes nobody a farthing, but could buy up half-a-dozen beggarly peers—I say, it strikes me that such a man is quite as good, if not better, than a lady of quality who has not a sixpence to bless herself with, and whose own grandee flesh and blood don’t seem to think her worth speaking to!’

‘You dare, sir, use such language to Lady Adelaide Lyndon?’ retorted a deep stern voice; and Randolph, who had opened the door unobserved by either, in time to hear this last speech, stepped in between the two. ‘You dare, Mr. Abel Spindler, offer such an affront to such a lady, and suppose it is to be done with impunity? Apologize this instant, sir—or not even the respect due to her presence will prevent my using stronger arguments to convince your understanding!’

Mr. Spindler, confounded by this unlooked-for interposition, stared at him without answering; Lady

Adelaide, scarcely less taken by surprise, stood motionless. Randolph turned to her with the deepest respect, requesting her pardon for the intrusion; Mr. Lyndon would explain the reason, and in the meanwhile he hoped she would allow him to relieve her from the presence of a person, who had shown himself quite unworthy of the honour of hers.

‘And pray, sir, by what right do you take upon yourself to interfere between her ladyship and me?’ stammered Mr. Spindler, recovering from his first surprise. ‘We have our own private affairs to settle, that concern nobody but ourselves, and will thank you not to meddle with what you don’t understand. Ask her ladyship, and she will tell you the same.’

Randolph looked at Lady Adelaide; she seemed ready to sink into the earth.

‘Ay, ay,’ continued Mr. Spindler, thrusting his hands into his pockets; ‘she knows better than to contradict me—she knows how much is in my power; let her deny it if she can!’

‘It is true—quite true, Mr. Randolph,’ said Lady Adelaide, speaking slowly, and with much difficulty; ‘he has far too much in his power, and he makes a cruel use of it. Oh! thank God, here is my father!’ And as Mr. Lyndon entered, she sprang forwards, and flung herself in his arms, hiding her face on his shoulder, and weeping bitterly.

‘My love! my dearest Adelaide!’ he began soothingly, alarmed at the violence of her agitation; ‘be composed! it is all over, and you did all you could—’

‘I did—I did—and to no purpose; only to provoke worse insult. Oh, sir, what have I done that you should expose me to this?’

He tried to explain, but she seemed incapable of hearing ; she only knew that there was a confusion of several voices speaking at once, and some strange sound that she could not account for ; and then that she was being supported into another room, and laid on a sofa ; and when she opened her eyes, there was no one by her but Henry.

She tried to recover herself, and sat up ; but a strange feeling of illness came over her the instant she moved, and he saw it so plainly that he hastened to relieve her mind.

‘ I am afraid you have had a troublesome visitor,’ he said, seating himself by her side, and speaking as cheerfully as he could ; ‘ and if we had only known it a little sooner, you would have escaped this *mauvais quart d’heure* ; but it will not be repeated. My uncle has told me everything, and he will soon be released from Spindler’s fangs, I trust, for ever.’

‘ Is it possible ? Henry, you are robbing your wife and child. You must not do it.’

‘ I would not, believe me. No man would be justified in so doing. And even if I did, it would not be of much use.’

‘ Then how—?’

‘ Well, a friend has offered the necessary accommodation to my uncle on the most liberal terms, and as soon as the proper forms have been gone through, Spindler will be paid. You can guess who it is, I dare say.’

She pressed her hand to her burning forehead ; she felt she could not bear much more.

‘ With all your unwillingness to accept obligation,’ added Henry, smiling, ‘ I think you will prefer this creditor to the other. And you must allow me to say,

that *I*, for one, feel that so friendly an act done in so liberal and gentlemanly a manner, deserves a little gratitude from us all.'

'Perhaps it does,' she said, in a low voice; 'and I will try to feel it for my father's sake—though it is my sentence of banishment from his roof. You know what I told you just now, Henry, and now I tell you this—remain here beholden to Mr. Randolph's generosity for a home, is what I cannot and will not do.'

'And what do you propose to do, then, my dear Lady Adelaide?'

'To earn my own bread, Henry.'

'And Walter's education?'

'I will earn that too. There are ways and means for a woman who is not afraid of work, whether it be for her head or her hands; and to you and your dear wife I look for advice how to begin. Do not think this is a sudden caprice. It is a fixed resolution, which the events of to-day have only helped to confirm.'

'I never accused you of caprice; I know no woman less open to the imputation; and I am now, as ever, at your service. But before you quite make up your mind, as you honour my wife by including her in our counsels, will you object to hearing what she has to say on the subject?'

'I have no objection to listen to one so sensible and kind; but my mind *is* made up fully. I have borne a great deal; I have shown I could bear more, if necessary; but *this*'—her hands were locked convulsively together on her knee—'*this* would be too much. God forgive me if it is my sinful pride! but I can take anything patiently from Maurice Randolph but his pity—and his purse.'

Something in the tone with which these words were spoken, made Henry put his hand quietly on her wrist. He was startled by the quick, fierce throbs.

‘You are tired and unwell,’ he said, kindly. ‘Let me persuade you to go and lie down in your own room, and keep perfectly quiet. It will do you good.’

‘It might,’ she said, impatiently; ‘but quiet is a luxury forbidden to illness in this house. Never be ill here, Henry, if you can help it; no, nor wretched either, if you would not grow desperate—for there is a species of kindness that, like some tender mercies we read of, is more cruel than neglect.’

Henry could not contradict her; they sat in silence for a few minutes; then, with a sudden renewal of feverish eagerness, she insisted on learning all the particulars of Mr. Randolph’s interposition—how he came to know anything of the matter, and what brought him just at the same time as Mr. Spindler. Finding opposition only made her worse, Henry told her in a few words all he knew; Mr. Randolph had accidentally overheard a speech of Mr. Spindler’s to her, while waiting in the library, where he had been shown, till Mr. Lyndon’s return—the day of their arrival. He had learned, during his negotiations about the school, further particulars, which had convinced him Spindler’s design was to ruin the Squire altogether; he had seen them that afternoon walking towards the Manorhouse together, and hurried by a short cut through the grounds, in hopes of being in time to save her from annoyance. ‘Just as you went in, he came up, and told me what was going on, and his plan of putting a stop to it. We went instantly in search of my uncle, and never was a man more thankful for a reprieve. He

tells me the misery he has been living in lately was almost more than his brain could endure.'

Lady Adelaide could well believe what she was feeling herself; but before she answered, to Henry's great relief, the ladies came home. He hastened to take his wife aside, and to confide to her his apprehensions, and the peculiar difficulties of the case. 'Try what you can do, my love, to calm her, and keep her quiet, or you will have to nurse her soon, in return for her doctoring the baby.'

Emma promised to do her best, but fearful of appearing to intrude beyond her province, waited to see what other people would do. There was no danger, she soon found, of Adelaide's case being neglected. Directly she had been convicted, though reluctantly, of a severe headache, she was besieged with questions as to how she had got it—what she had been doing—what she had *not* been doing—and what she was going to do. To escape this cross-examination, she at last consented to go to her room; and Emma, who had compassionately refrained from suggesting or asking anything, hoped she would at least be left there in quiet. But quiet was a medicine unknown in the family pharmacopœia. It would have been thought the most heartless, inattentive thing in the world not to go up and down stairs every half-hour, to see if she wanted anything, or to talk over her case at the foot of her bed; and first Penelope went to persuade her, to try a new pungent scent Mrs. Grayling had specially recommended for the nerves; and then Mr. Lyndon, notwithstanding Henry's urgent remonstrances, would go in to see how she was; and when there, could not help thanking her for all she had done and tried to do, and

expatiating on the very handsome conduct of Mr. Randolph ; and after this was over, Lucy crept in to offer her cordial, which had done her such wonderful good once before, and with tears in her eyes besought her to take only one table-spoonful every three hours. Then a visitor happening to call, and hearing the news, not only left a civil message of regret and suggestion, that must be carried up instantly, and duly answered, but spread the information to all whom it didn't concern—the consequence being a succession of inquiries and offers of immediate cure all the evening, not one of which was spared Lady Adelaide—and Henry wondered at her warning no longer.

‘It comes to this,’ he said to his wife at night, ‘I shall have medical advice for her to-morrow, and you must take her in hand. Her nerves have been overwrought, and we shall have her in a brain fever before we know where we are.’

Emma shared his uneasiness, and was often awake in the night, listening ; but as all was perfectly still, she hoped for the best. As she was leaving her room in the morning, she found Walter wandering disconsolately about the gallery. She asked after his mother. ‘I don't know, I am sure, cousin Emma ; she began to get up, and now she is lying down again, and asked me not to kiss her.’

Emma hesitated a moment, and then went quietly to Adelaide's door. Her gentle knock being unanswered, she entered unbidden, and found her, as she feared, completely prostrated with the agony of nervous headache, which she had been enduring all night, sooner than appeal to such help as had been offered her by day. She attempted to apologize when Emma

came in, and to beg she would not trouble herself; but was too helpless with pain to offer any resistance, and Mrs. Henry Lyndon felt she had stood on ceremony long enough. She began at once to put cold applications on the burning temples; and the gentle touch, and the quiet, unobtrusive movements, soothed poor Adelaide's spirits as much as the relief of the remedies. All her skill, however, could only slightly alleviate the evil; the fevered pulse was too high to yield without decided treatment; and Henry, without asking leave, set off, after a hasty breakfast, to borrow Randolph's horse, which had been offered him the day before—promising to bring a doctor back with him, if there was one within twenty miles.

Of course there was no small excitement in the house, when this was known. Mr. Lyndon, in an agony of remorse, confessed to Penelope all that had happened; and Penelope, her whole soul in a tumult with the news, partly resentment at having been kept in the dark, and partly exultation at the defeat of Mr. Spindler's audacious scheme—ran eagerly upstairs with her keys and house-books in her hand, to talk it all over with her sister-in-law. Lady Adelaide heard the well-known step and voice, and looked up imploringly at Emma, who understood very well what that meant, and slipped out, with a great deal of inward trepidation under her most winning exterior, to stop Miss Lyndon midway. She explained that Lady Adelaide was in such a feverish state, that any temptation to talk was a risk; and as she was less likely to do so with a comparative stranger, if Miss Lyndon would trust her, *she* would sit with her sister, and Penelope would perhaps be so very good as to keep an eye on

dear baby. She had promised the nurse a receipt for that particularly nice jelly—would it be too much trouble to teach her how it was made this morning? Miss Lyndon was all compliance, and rather pleased than otherwise; it was quite true, poor dear Adelaide *would* talk and excite herself; it was no use telling her to be quiet—she always *would* have her own way.

‘Well, she must have ours now,’ said Emma, cheerfully; and she hastened back to relieve the mind of her patient. She saw her parched lips moving, and bending over her, heard her murmur, ‘Help me not to *think*.’ The overwrought brain could not rest; and past scenes, returning in vivid minuteness of detail—calculations of expenses which never would come correct—imaginary conversations full of convincing argument—and harassing conjectures as to what might have been the result, if this had been done, and that left undone—had been wearying it through those long, sleepless hours, till it was within a hair’s-breadth of delirium; and she knew it. And Emma knew it too; but she concealed her alarm, and sat by her side in the darkened room, occasionally bathing her forehead, but mostly with her hand in that of the sufferer. Now and then, as she thought she could bear it, a promise from the Scripture, a verse of a favourite hymn, a word or two of prayer for help and patience, in the soft, heartfelt tones of tender sympathy, stole on the silence; and never failed to draw a responsive pressure from the hand of the listener. Adelaide Lyndon felt as if a ministering spirit had been sent to keep hers from sinking; and humbled and broken as it was, the consolation could not have come at a more seasonable moment. It gave her strength to endure, and assisted her naturally

resolute will to control, in some degree, the excitement of her nerves. She had lain quiet so long, at one time, that her nurse had begun to hope she had fallen asleep, till she suddenly looked up to ask Emma if she knew anybody who wanted a governess?

‘No,’ said Emma, taking care not to show how much she was startled, ‘nobody.’

‘I have been thinking it well over, and calculating,’ she went on, hurriedly, ‘and I feel sure with what I have, and the salary I might expect to receive, Walter might go to school this summer. But he must have new clothes; I have just finished his shirts;’ and she tried to raise her head to look round for her work, but the shoot of pain was too severe, and she sank back on the pillow. Emma was afraid she was really beginning to wander. Adelaide, as if guessing her thoughts, emphatically assured her she was quite in earnest; she meant to earn her own bread in future, and *nobody* should prevent her.

‘Very good, my dear friend,’ said Emma, ‘so you shall; but you must be well enough to eat it first.’

Adelaide smiled faintly, and said no more.

CHAPTER III.

Draw my weary heart away
 From this gloom and strife,
 And these fever pains allay
 With the dew of life ;
 Thou canst calm the troubled mind,
 Thou its dread canst still,
 Teach me to be all resigned
 To my Father's will.

LITÆA GERMANICA.

NOBODY who has lived long enough in the world to have gained a little experience in its endless varieties of disappointment, will deny that a long-wished-for object very seldom fulfils expectation. It is the trite theme of moralists, and points half the stings of modern satirical fiction. And yet, like many other truths, that appear such a matter of course when applied to our neighbour—as soon as it is applicable to ourselves, it has a wonderful faculty of taking us by surprise. Maurice Randolph would have found it rather difficult to explain, satisfactorily, the state of mind in which he walked back to the rectory from the Manor-house ; but it certainly was not that of serene, self-complacent triumph. He had done a liberal and handsome thing, as the grateful expressions of Mr. Lyndon bore testimony ; he had baffled a vulgar and grasping adversary, and saved a respectable name from difficulties, if not from ruin—and at the same time, and by the same means, had gratified one of the most ardent

passions of his nature—and yet his heart was heavy within him. The act of heaping coals of fire on the haughty head had not proved so sweet in realization as it had promised to be. With all his imagined sternness of purpose, he found every pulse in his body thrilling with her poignant distress ; that face, so beautiful in its agony, haunted him like a remorse ; and he could not conceal from himself, that he would gladly give all he possessed in the world, to be allowed to heal the wound he had helped to lacerate, and see her comforted and at rest. The conversation of his old friend that evening about the school and lectures that were to be—the chatter of Sophy, not to be styled by a more dignified name, touching all that had transpired in the village during his absence—for the first time irritated and oppressed him ; he was glad when Dr. Home announced, with an apology, that he was going to sit up an hour or two later, to finish a refractory sermon ; giving him an excuse to stroll out with his cigar, and watch for the light in Adelaide Lyndon's window.

Disappointment awaited him even here. Lights gleamed as usual in the other chambers, and disappeared one by one ; but hers, that usually burned long after the rest, never appeared at all. In vain he told himself it was foolish to be fanciful about nothing—that there might be fifty reasons to account for it ; it was all very true, but not the less did the silent gloom strike upon his heart with a presentiment of evil, that made his night, if not one of as much suffering, very nearly as sleepless as her own.

One thing he vowed again and again ; that he would implore an interview with her the next day, and at whatever sacrifice of pride, dignity, or resentment,

obtain such a reconciliation and amnesty, as might enable him to serve her with all his life and soul, without causing her a regret, or claiming a shadow of reward. Not a tear should she shed, not a burden should she bear, that disinterested devotion and untiring watchfulness could avert or roll away.

The morning came at last, and with it Henry, bringing the news of Lady Adelaide's illness.

Randolph felt as if he had grown ten years older. He dared not pause to think on what he had done ; to be actively employed, and that instantly, was his only chance. His horse was at Henry's disposal of course, and he had almost resolved to mount the little pony himself, to accompany him, when Abner observed that Mr. Ousel had, to his certain knowledge, just bought a good trotting hack, fit to ride or drive, which, no doubt, he would be happy to lend—he would run that minute and ask. And so he did, and what message he gave was best known to himself, but he brought the horse back with him, and Randolph asked no questions, and overtook Henry before he had gone far. The lawyer, knowing the country best, acted as guide, and they were not long in reaching Mr. Wylde's house. He was just gone out ; they tried another, the further end of Shareham—the same answer. Back they came to Mr. Wylde's, in hopes of tracing him—received information—rode on his tracks, just missing him by five minutes everywhere, and at last pursued him to a large brick building, surrounded by a high garden wall, which Henry explained to be an old-fashioned school, of long standing, much favoured by the daughters of the well-to-do yeomanry of the county. At the gate stood Mr. Wylde's gig at last. Henry sent in his card, and an

urgent message ; and while they were waiting, a party of girls and teachers passed in from their walk. One of them, whether pupil or teacher, he could not guess, looked sharply up at Randolph, as he drew back his horse. It was Miss Unwin, the young lady he had seen expelled from Lady Delaunay's institution. The surprise was mutual, but seeing he was recognised, he lifted his hat. She coloured, returned a somewhat supercilious bow, and went in with the rest. He had ample time to think it over, if he cared so to do, as there were invalids Mr. Wylde could not leave immediately, and neither the fretting of man or beast availed them much. A maid-servant at last came out to apologize, and taking an opportunity, while Henry was talking to the surgeon's groom, made a signal of secrecy to Randolph, and slipped a note into his hand. It was written in evident haste.

'SIR,—As Lady Delaunay's friend, you, of course, take *her* view of my case, and may think it your duty to society to set everybody against me ; but if you are *generous*, and can feel for a young person, misunderstood by narrow-minded prejudice, simply because she thinks and *reads* for herself (I do not pretend to ignore my *crime*), you will allow me to remain in my present situation, without taking advantage of the unhappy circumstances in which you happen to have seen me placed. I came here as teacher in answer to an advertisement. Were a prejudice once excited against me, it might cost me my home and my bread. All Lady Delaunay's dogmas are not necessarily truth, nor do they necessarily lead to perfection, as she may yet find out. Relying on your honour, I am, your obliged,

' ISABELLA UNWIN.'

‘Humph!’ thought Maurice, as he slipped this missive into his waistcoat pocket, ‘if this young lady is here as a teacher, education in these parts must be in a promising state. What does she suppose I care about her sayings and doings, that she goes so mysteriously to work—after the style of her favourite romancists, I suppose? She may read the *Grand Cyrus* for me, if she will only hurry this poisoning allopathist, whom, if he dawdles here much longer, I will have out by the hair of his head.’

Fortunately for the peace of the rival systems, Mr. Wyldes soon after made his appearance, and as they would not hear of his keeping any other appointment, they were speedily on their way to Cannymoor.

Randolph would not trust himself to enter the Manor-house. He could not rely on sufficient composure to meet either Mr. Lyndon or the ladies. He waited with the horses till Henry came out to tell him the medical man’s opinion. It was much what they had expected; there was a good deal of fever evidently brought on by nervous excitement, and quiet was indispensable. All Emma had done had been perfectly right, and had, no doubt, hindered the feverish symptoms from gaining ground. There was no cause for alarm, only for care and tenderness, and nothing must be allowed to discompose or excite her in any way.

‘So there is my wife installed as head nurse in ordinary; and so long as she can be a comfort to her, there she shall stay. I must be in town before the end of next week, and I hope by that time to be able to leave without anxiety. By the way, I have just had a bland note from Spindler, regretting to hear of her ladyship’s indisposition, and announcing his own immediate

departure for London, where he appoints the day and place of our meeting, if quite agreeable to myself and Mr. Lyndon. If it will suit you to go with me next week, you would perhaps put up with bachelor fare, and give me your company?’

‘Thank you, we will see—if all be well *here* then,’ stammered Randolph, as if half aware of what he was saying, or was said to him.

‘Why, yes,’ observed Henry, coolly; ‘if all were not well, I should be apt not to go myself; but I see no cause for frightening oneself because a poor woman has been worried into a fever. I shall only take care it does not happen again—at any rate, in this house—since that shelter is left her, thanks to you.’

Randolph turned hastily away without reply. He could bear anything better at that moment, than to be looked upon as her benefactor. Long after he had got rid of the horses did he wander about near the Manor-house, wearying himself with the question that would return, and could not be answered—‘When should he see her again?’

Alas! it was an idle dream his pride had called up, when he imagined that all he desired was to humble, and then to leave her. He knew now, beyond the possibility of misunderstanding, that all the happiness of which his heart was capable, was bound up in that fragile existence; and if the mere attempt to reckon the days and hours which must pass before he could once more look upon her face, made his stout heart sick with fruitless longing—what would be the reality?

‘A sad business this, indeed!’ was the greeting he received, as he at last entered the rectory parlour. ‘I

went up to the Manorhouse to inquire, while you were away, and I am quite grieved to find this has been coming on some time. Miss Lyndon has noticed a change in her ever since the evening of her fainting fit, and that dear little wife of Henry's reports that she confessed not to have had a night's rest for weeks. Flesh and blood, we all know, will not stand that long, though the one be as fair as Helen, and the other as Norman as Rollo. I observed myself that she was upset by something that night; and then all her suspense and trouble since—ah, I see, poor thing! she has gone on till she dropped. She will do that once too often, I am afraid. How any one can have the heart—Why, Maurice, Maurice, lad! what ails thee? My dear boy, what is it?'

For Randolph had flung himself down on the little horsehair sofa, and buried his face, while his powerful frame quivered like a reed with his deep, uncontrollable sobs.

That night there was no secret between them.

For two days Lady Adelaide continued very ill; on the afternoon of the third, she fell into a quiet sleep of some hours' duration, and awoke free from pain and fever. From this time, her recovery progressed satisfactorily; the unwonted weakness made her very docile, and she was soon able to creep to the easy-chair, which Henry had gone over to Shareham to procure for her, and let her nurses rule her as they pleased. She asked no questions; she knew the cares and anxieties of the outer world would return only too soon; and her brain and nerves enjoyed their sabbath even at the cost of health and strength. Peace and comfort had come

with Emma ; the very sound of her light step across the room, and the touch of her neat hands in the various little offices which she rendered so much more pleasantly than any one else, were refreshment to her senses, at a time when their natural delicacy was rendered more acute by weakness. The friendship begun over the couch of the infant, ripened fast into intimacy by her own. That one topic, in which they had so much in common, soon opened the way to others : when Adelaide was once led to speak of her own lost darling, a wide breach had been made in her defences ; and having once tasted the sweetness of sympathy, she was surprised to find herself, by degrees, opening her heart to her newly made friend, as it would have taken her years to do with any one else. The more Emma saw of her generous and highly toned nature, mistaken as its impulses often were—and was able to compare what she knew of her former life, with what she saw of her present—the warmer grew her tenderness and good-will, and the keener her regret that she should be so often misunderstood and unappreciated. Still, she could not help thinking it was partly her own fault ; and what she thought, she could not help showing. Whenever she saw any of her neighbours, their inquiries after ‘her ladyship’ were so assiduous, there was nothing they were not all ready to do, or to procure, if possible, that might add to her comfort, or beguile her convalescence ; and granting that their notions of comfort and recreation were slightly comical, and that their tongues were apt to run, ‘not wisely, but too well,’ still, neighbours they were, and kind-hearted, and among them Lady Adelaide’s lot was cast, and therefore towards them she had a duty to perform,

and there was no peace of mind to be looked for while duty was left undone.

Without saying this in so many words, it soon forced itself upon Adelaide's understanding, and gave her ample subject-matter for meditation, but not for anger ; partly, from the simplicity and unconsciousness of her monitress, and partly, because a stronger, yet gentler voice had already whispered the same within. It was not very agreeable to contemplate. She could not conceal from herself that it was one thing to explain and enforce upon her boy, as she so often did, the golden rules of the ' duty towards my neighbour—' and another to practise them in her intercourse with the Cannymoor world. Many as had been the shortcomings and mistakes to which her eyes had opened of late, this seemed the most unwelcome discovery of all. And when there came one day a note from Miss Sweetman, with a small vase of very stiff wax flowers, of her own making, copied from a Berlin wool pattern, which she hoped her ladyship would allow to stand on her table, in humble anticipation of the beauties of summer—and another time a message from old Mrs. Grayling, and a pile of novels, for the solace of her lonely hours, with markers in popular passages, and a hope that her ladyship would favour them by marking in turn any part she most approved—and one sent her a knitted comforter of all the colours in the rainbow, and another a bottle of perfume of extra potency, and everybody rang at the bell every day to inquire how she was—a sense of ingratitude and ill-desert began to creep over her, and its effect was sooner visible than she was aware. Penelope was at first not quite easy about the alteration in her sister-in-law. People were

always so mighty good and amiable when they were going to die ; and much as she had been plagued by her tantrums, she would rather put up with them all her life, than lose the poor dear thing. But once re-assured on that point, she trod on air. In taking her share of nursing and attendance, she spared neither time nor trouble ; and scrupulously avoided all unpleasant topics, or anything that might bring on exciting conversation ; but as a little compensation for this restraint, she kept up a despotism in the sick room, that contrasted strongly with Emma's mild, constitutional government. The fact was, there was something so delicious in having the contumacious Adelaide helplessly at her mercy, it was not in human nature to withstand the temptation of making the most of an authority that might be so brief ; laws were enacted, and measures enforced for the mere pleasure of enjoying her unresisting obedience ; and in one way and another, she sauced Lady Adelaide's broths, so to speak, with the stimulating chalybeate of the rod of iron.

The unanswerable excuse of 'putting things tidy' afforded a charming opportunity for a great deal more ransacking and re-arranging of the room than the owner at all liked, or would have suffered, had she been strong enough to prevent it. Her worldly goods were, indeed, a curious medley, and she apologized for it to Emma, who, observing the military neatness with which everything was stowed away, could not help thinking that the reformers, as is not unfrequently the case, were doing as much harm as good. A few bottles of acids for Walter's experiments—a small collection of dried plants, birds' eggs, stones, and skeleton

flowers, all claiming the same proprietor—well-worn classical and rudimental books, studied at night for his instruction by day—her own small library, enlarged by loans from the rectory, old-fashioned, but full of pregnant matter—her scanty wardrobe, faultless in its ladylike arrangement—her unfinished pile of needlework for her boy, which her feeble fingers were yearning to complete—her husband's travelling desk, which she always used, and his sword, which she suffered no hand to brighten but her own—formed the principal articles in the inventory, and presented little to gratify the curious. Gratified, however, they were with the mere privilege of looking them well over ; and the first thing Penelope did, was to 'make,' as she said, 'a clearance of all the horrid, dangerous stuff, that might poison the whole house ;' luring Mr. Wylde into pronouncing them unsafe, and then coaxing his groom to carry them off in his gig. All the dry books went next, as it was enough to give any one the headache to look at them ; and what might have followed, it were hard to say, had not Lady Adelaide, of two evils choosing the least, in real desperation accepted the offer of being read to, and thus purchased peace for her chattels, while securing edification for her mind. In this good work, Miss Lucy was only too pleased to join ; and between them and Mrs. Grayling, they contrived to pour into her resigned ears such a stream of depressing fiction, as must soon have reduced her spirits to an alarmingly low ebb, if she had not had presence of mind enough sometimes to listen without attending. Indeed, she was detected more than once, dropping quietly off to sleep just at the popular passages ; but as this only happened under Lucy's less vigilant rule, and was

always apologized for with contrite politeness, it did not mar the general harmony.

Henry Lyndon, finding all going on so well, prepared to return to London, and arranged to leave his wife and child at Cannymoor till Easter, when he would complete his own visit, and take them home. In spite of laws and regulations, he made his way into the invalid's room to take leave; engaging to do her no mischief, but the contrary. She was reclining in the chair he had given her, looking pale, and delicate, and very lovely; and the grateful expression in her eyes, as she held out her hands to meet his, spoke volumes of what she felt. He pressed them warmly, and was considering how to introduce business, without risk, when she began it herself, still detaining his hands as if they were anchors of hope.

'Henry, you remember what I told you. You will keep it in mind, will you not?'

'I do—I will. You shall act as you think proper, depend upon it. You have one friend, at least, who has your happiness at heart, and who will watch over your interests to the best of his ability, if you will let him. Will you keep this in mind?'

'Ah, Henry, I owe you too much already to forget.'

'Would you like to rub off the score? I will show you how. There is a small, but snug tenement in London, where there is always room for you—not such as you have a right to expect, but you are too old a soldier to be particular; and here,' drawing Emma towards him, 'is a lady who has been longing to invite you, and has not mustered audacity enough. Give a little encouragement to a young beginner, and when

you want a change of home, let us have the preference. We ask it as a favour.'

She looked up at them as they stood together, in the vigour of health and energy—so quietly happy in their mutual affection and confidence; and tried to smile, but her head drooped, and joining Emma's hand to her husband's, before they could prevent her, she bent over them, and pressed her lips on both.

'Do not be afraid,' she said, as she relinquished her hold, and leaned quietly back on her pillows, smiling faintly at Henry's look of dismay; 'I am not going to alarm you, Henry, as I did the other day; you have done me good, for I feel, let what will happen to me, my boy has friends in you both. And he will need them; for his father's sake, Henry—he is in some things so like him—for his sake I know you will——'

'For his father's sake, for his mother's, and for his own,' said Henry; 'and as you say, he will need friends, for so promising a young firebrand I never saw. The very personification of philosophy in sport made mischief in earnest. Surely it is not true that you allowed him to scare the maids by scrawling with phosphorus?'

'He only did it once,' pleaded the mother, 'and some story put it into his head.'

'No, don't apologize; it is only in accordance with the modern system of scientific education. I am glad it was not on my new paint, that is all. When your grand new school-house and lecture-room are finished, you will have plenty of that sort of thing, no doubt. Walter is crazy to convince the cads that ice can be made by an air-pump. I tell you what, if his uncle once got hold of that boy, he would never let you have him again—I

saw how taken he was by my description. Ah, you shake your head despondingly : I don't.'

Emma touched his arm, not quite satisfied with the flush that was creeping over her patient's cheeks.

'Well,' he said, taking the hint, 'I must go, trusting to find you strong and independent on my return. Do you remember my warning about your cousin, Miss Conway?'

'Yes ; and though I cannot quite think as you do, I will act as if I did.'

'Then I have only to add another respecting a certain individual, possessing the same dangerous qualities as that lady, without the advantages of birth and breeding—Mr. Abel Spindler. I sincerely trust that you will not be troubled with him again ; but as he seems to have impudence enough for anything, if you *should*, let no persuasions, no attempts to work upon your fears, or your self-devotion, induce you to have any dealings with him whatsoever. Refer him to me as your legal adviser ; say you have put everything into my hands, and leave me to manage him. What else are lawyers for?'

'And pray what are nurses for?' interrupted Penelope, coming briskly in, with a couple of volumes under her arm, and seating herself by Adelaide's chair, 'if they allow law to be discussed in the patient's room? As if it was not enough to make the healthy and able-bodied sick—let alone the convalescent ! Your wife may allow it, Harry, but I don't ; so take your leave, and then right about face—quick march, and be off. Emma may go down and see the last of you, for I am going to read to Adelaide. Good-bye !'

So peremptorily was he turned out, his client had

only time, by a gentle pressure of his hand, to acknowledge his advice ; over which she had leisure to ponder afterwards during the reading of seven mortal chapters of what Miss Sweetman had especially recommended for Lady Adelaide Lyndon, as giving a finished portrait of fashionable life in the highest circles—*Rotten Row, or the Star of the Season*. Whereof the biographer has only been able to collect, that it contained, like the Emperor's famous army,

Marshals by the dozen, and dukes by the score,
Princes a few, and kings one or two.

CHAPTER IV.

And her great heart, through all the faultful past,
Went sorrowing. . . .

TENNYSON.

MISS LYNDON'S exertions for her sister-in-law's intellectual and moral development were not confined to one branch of literature. On the second Sunday after Adelaide's attack, when she was beginning to grow rebellious against restrictions and rules, and to talk with increasing temerity of soon being about as usual, Lucy came into her room to announce that Penny was going to the afternoon service with her father, Emma would take the baby into the drawing-room to amuse mamma, while the little nurse went to church; and Penny had sent Adelaide something which she was sure would do her good. With this, she produced a small, square manuscript, of that peculiar shape and appearance that is like nothing but a sermon; and no less a sermon it proved to be than that preached by Dr. Home in the morning.

'Penelope was so impressed by it, she followed him into the vestry, and teased him till he lent it to her, though he said it was against his rules. But as Penny says, she should never forgive herself if she let you miss such an advantage.'

'She is very kind,' said Lady Adelaide, holding out her hand for the manuscript.

‘Oh, my dear, you are not to sit trying your eyes over the dear old doctor’s scrawly writing ; I promised faithfully I would read it to you, and if you don’t like me to do it, Penny will stay at home and come instead.’

This settled the matter, and Adelaide submitted ; with the consolatory reflection, that even through the medium of Lucy’s delivery, her old pastor’s discourse would be an improvement on *Rotten Row*.

The monotonous intonation where the writing and meaning were clear, the puzzled hesitations where they grew obscure, the lively flights of imaginative fancy where they were unintelligible, certainly contrived to make the second reading a wonderful contrast to the first ; nevertheless, the listener’s attention became fixed from the beginning, and never flagged to the end.

The text was one she remembered too well—‘God resisteth the proud ;’ and *pride*, as the opening announced, formed the subject ; the second division of the verse being reserved for the afternoon. Prolific enough, in good sooth, appeared the first ; and the manner in which it was handled was long remembered in Canny-moor. It was always remarked that he was severer in Lent than at other seasons, and this time he seemed to have put on his terrors more sternly than usual. He held up the sin in every possible light, hunted it into every corner, exposed it under every disguise, traced it in every disposition. There was the pride of birth, and the pride of low extraction—the pride of wealth, and the pride of poverty—and the pride of pretence, which belonged to all four ; there was the pride of reserve, and the pride of indiscretion—the pride of

revenge, and the pride of forgiveness—the pride of impenitence, and the pride of reform—the pride of egotism, and the pride of generosity—the pride of self-worship, and the pride of self-mortification—the pride of knowledge, and the pride of ignorance—the pride of unbelief, and the pride of religious profession. For all these, and more, he had a lash, and a stinging one; there was nobody in the church that did not wince, more or less, either for themselves or for their neighbours. The paragraph, however, that had charmed Miss Lyndon most, and which she had charged her deputy to deliver with most emphasis, was a quotation, with which the sermon concluded—the last words coming out with a blow on the closed page, as if it were a *coup-de-grace* upon the enemy.

‘How much it delighteth them when they are able to appal with the cloudiness of their look; how far they exceed the terms wherewith man’s nature should be limited; how they bear their heads above others—how they browbeat all men, which do not receive their sentences as oracles, with marvellous applause and approbation; how they look upon no man but with an indirect countenance, nor hear anything, save their own praises, with patience, nor speak without scornfulness and disdain! How they use their servants as if they were beasts—their inferiors as servants—their equals as inferiors—and as for superiors, acknowledge *none*; how they admire themselves as venerable, puissant, wise, circumspect, provident, every way great; taking all men besides themselves for ciphers—poor, inglorious, silly creatures—needless burdens of the earth—offscourings—nothing! . . .

'Give me the hearts of all men, *humbled*, and what is there that can overthrow or disturb the peace of the world? Where many things are cause of much evil . . . but PRIDE, of ALL!'

'Where is that taken from?' asked Adelaide, quickly.

'I don't know, dear, exactly; but there is a name marked opposite, Horner—Hawker—which is it? I know Hawker's *Morning Portion*, and the Life of Dr. Johnson—oh no, that is Hawkins. It is from Hawker's *Morning Portion*, dear, you may depend.'

'Let me see,' said Lady Adelaide, doubtfully.

Lucy was reluctant to trust it out of her own keeping, but the invalid was growing too many for her, single-handed; and under protest, she gave it up.

'Hooker—I thought so,' said Adelaide.

'Did you, really? Well, to be sure! and so it is Hooker! What have I read about him somewhere? He was a Pilgrim Father, wasn't he?—or something of that sort—and brought home potatoes and tobacco? I cannot think how such a good pious man could make such a mistake as to introduce anything so odious as smoking. There now, my dear, as you are not to tire yourself, I must take this away.'

But to this Lady Adelaide would not consent, and knowing Penelope to be safely out of reach, she stood on her rights, and would not be convinced that to look it over at her leisure would infallibly bring back a return of feverish headache. And when the old rector, who called in the evening to see her, was admitted by Emma into her room, he found it opened by her side, with more than one suspicious blister on the relentless pages. Of this he took no notice at first, being more

intent on observing her altered, though improving looks, and the delicacy of the thin white hand, which he held on his own sturdy palm, as if afraid he should break it. She smiled at his wistful expression, and assured him the hand was stronger than he thought, and meant to do a good deal of work yet, before it had done.

‘Well, my dear friend, so long as it is the work appointed you, I say nothing against that. Work does everybody good, and I dare say you have found some to do, even up here, with this kind little Christian soul pottering about you, in the way ladies understand so much better than anybody else. Do you know, I could almost fancy being ill myself, to be so petted; but I never yet took kindly to a flannel nightcap and a big basin of gruel, which is all the comfort I get from Colly and Sophy. Well, so you are reading my scolding for the million—eh?’

‘Is it for the million, sir? It seemed to me meant only for *one*.’

‘Come, I am glad you felt that; if everybody thinks the same, I am satisfied. But, my dear, you may make your mind quite easy on one thing, that whenever I preach a sermon entirely upon *you*, I shall take care it is when you are there to hear it.’

‘I might have known that, certainly,’ said she, with a smile; ‘you never yet scrupled to tell me the truth.’

‘Yes, I have, over and over again. If I had had courage enough to speak my mind to you a year ago or more, I should have done my duty much better than I have; but I was afraid of hurting your feelings, and that I might do more harm than good. Otherwise I often longed to come and take you by the arm, my dear

friend, and say, "When there is so much work to be done, why standest thou here all the day idle?"'

'What work *could* I have done here?' asked she, colouring.

'Would you have been sent here, do you think, if there had not been some waiting for you? You came among us, our superior in every natural advantage; and the very circumstances of trial and affliction, under which you were placed, only made all hearts more ready to bid you welcome. You might have won, and then have improved every one with whom you came in contact; all that was necessary was, that you should *love* them. Granted, that you found plenty to annoy your taste, plenty of old-fashioned, and not a few silly ways; ignorance of real life, want of education, and I may add, want of good sense and tongue government. Well, you knew better, and it was for you to make the better ways so attractive that they would be glad to follow your lead. It would have cost you very little trouble; it is as natural to you to be fascinating, as it is to some people to be the reverse.'

The blunt compliment came out so oddly, that Mrs. Henry Lyndon, who had grown slightly uncomfortable during this speech, could not restrain a smile; but it was lost upon Lady Adelaide, whose attitude plainly showed the pain she felt at a charge, which her conscience would not allow her to refute, nor her respect for the speaker to resent. She made no reply, though he paused for one.

'Well,' said he, at last, after a quiet observation of her half-averted face and raised colour, 'what has been the result of your acting otherwise? Why, that there are not half-a-dozen persons in the parish who

know you as you are ; how should they ? And so some one who has taken up a wrong notion repeats it, and the less true a thing is, the readier people are to believe it, and to tell it again, and embellish it, perhaps, with a few touches of their own ; till, by the time it has gone the round, and some good-natured friend tells it you, you hardly know yourself, nor could anybody else. If I had no better means of knowing you than by common report, I should not venture to sit here, telling you disagreeable things ; for it requires,' added he, holding out his hand with his usual hearty kindness, and more than usual respect of manner, 'no small amount of humility to bear plain speaking, and no less magnanimity to forgive it.'

She could not but return the frank pressure. 'Ah, sir,' she said, trying to smile as she looked up ; 'do not be too sure ; it is as much as I can do.'

'Only tell me, then, am I right in what I have said?'

'I wish I could deny it. We see the truth sometimes too late.'

'Too late? what do you mean by that? I trust there will be many years for you to profit by my advice, long after I cease to give it. *Too late* is an under turnkey of Giant Despair, and I detest the very rattle of his bolts and bars. No, no ; if trouble has taught you a difficult lesson, it has not been merely to torment you in your weakness, but to show you what to do with your strength. You say you are ready to work—let patience finish hers, and rest and comfort will come in time. This is the very injunction I have had to lay on your poor friend, Mrs. Smith.'

The conversation, as he had intended, turned after this upon the sick woman and her child, and the rector

was just telling her of the probability that the mother would be discovered, when he was interrupted by a vehement petition from Walter. He had been kept out of the room much more than he at all approved, and there was something very particular he had to say that he really could not put off any longer. He would not stay five minutes, but might he come in?

The moment permission was given, he made one bound on to his mother's knee—nestling his rough curly head on her shoulder, and almost overpowering her with his caresses and his weight.

'It is so *jolly dull* without you downstairs, mamma! and on Sundays worst of all; for nobody has got anything to do, and so they sit and growl at each other, and me—no, I didn't mean to be rude, I won't again—but I do want you to be well; it is so stupid saying my lessons to Aunt Lucy; she does not know anything I ask her, and she always forgets which is latitude and which is longitude—fancy, mamma! Oh, and I must tell you, I was reading Queen Elizabeth to her yesterday, and just for fun I jumped on to Anne, and she never found it out, only all of a sudden Aunt Penny looked up so sharp when I came to the Duke of Marlborough, I was obliged to hop back again to Sir Walter Raleigh. But I say, mamma,' once more stopping the remonstrance he saw on her lips; 'I was going to ask you, do you happen to want to know exactly what o'clock it is, to a second?'

It had not occurred to her, but she would, if he wished it.

'Because if you do, look *here!*' And he pulled out a small gold hunting-watch, with a short chain and handsome seal, which Dr. Home, for one, recognised directly.

‘Is not that a beauty, mamma? just what a gentleman ought to wear?’

‘It is, indeed,’ said Lady Adelaide, shaking her head with a smile and a blush at Emma; ‘and a great deal too good for some gentleman I could name. Cousin Henry spoils us both.’

‘No, he doesn’t at all. He had nothing to do with it; had he, cousin Emma?’

‘Then how is it,’ his mother said, gravely, ‘that you have broken my rule, never to accept a present without my leave?’

‘I have not; it is no present—only a fair exchange. You know the little old watch you gave me, with the chain of your hair; it never went right, and you said it was quite worn out. Well, he took such a fancy to it, just as he was going away, nothing would satisfy him but we must change; it was exactly the size he liked; he had a great taste for old trinkets; and he could get it mended as good as new, or better, if I would let him have it, chain and all. I told him it must be *very* old; for it was yours when you were quite little; but he did not mind that. I knew it didn’t matter about your hair, because you have such heaps—enough for me to make chains of all my life, you know, mamma; and it is so much more gentlemanly to have a short one hanging down; and the seal is a real antique, he said. I don’t exactly know what that means, but—’

‘Stop, Walter, I do not understand; do you mean that cousin Henry was in earnest?’

‘Cousin Henry had nothing to do with it, I tell you. It was Mr. Randolph.’

The watch dropped from Lady Adelaide’s hand; the rector caught it just in time.

‘I thought I knew it again,’ said he ; ‘but you were mighty close about it, youngster. When did he give it you?’

‘When I wished him good-bye at the rectory door ; and he lifted me up in his arms to put the chain round his neck, and said he should never wear any other. I didn’t want to be taken up like a great baby, but he is so strong, he nearly took all my breath away with the hug he gave me, and said he should never forget the kindness I had done him, and hoped we should be friends for life. So I said I hoped so too ; I could do no less, could I, mamma?’

‘Perhaps not,’ she said, as if the words choked her.

‘Then, as it is no longer a secret, may I run and show it to grandpapa ? I long for him to see it—it is so much better than his !’

The amiability of this reason was, to say the least of it, questionable, but it passed unnoticed. Silence was taken for assent, and away he flew, happily unconscious of the vexation he had caused his mother. As soon as the door closed upon him, she turned to the rector with a voice tremulous with impatience.

‘I do beg of you, sir, as a personal favour, to make your friend Mr. Randolph understand once for all, that these polite attempts to confer obligations upon me give me so much pain, he must see the propriety of discontinuing them. Others may gratefully avail themselves of his liberal assistance ; but to that I am no party, nor my son. I owe too much already to my friends to suppose we can go through the world without their help ; but from those who are not and never can be, it ceases to be a service—and when forced against our express desire, partakes of the nature of insult.’

‘ I perfectly agree with you, my dear ; but if it is not too great a liberty, may I ask why Maurice Randolph can never hope to be your friend ?’

‘ *That*, sir, you must ask *him*.’

‘ Well, you see, I *have*.’

Lady Adelaide looked at him fixedly, too startled to articulate the question he read in her eyes.

‘ Just as you have already conjectured, my dear, he told me everything.’

‘ He *did* ?’ she repeated slowly, and in a low, hollow voice—‘ he *did* ?’

‘ Yes ; he was so cut up about your illness, that he could not help pouring out his full heart to his old friend—and yours. And I promised him, in return, that as soon as you were able to listen, I would ask you to forgive him.’

‘ Forgive him—for what ?’ asked she, in the same tone, as if speaking in a dream.

Dr. Home looked at Emma ; who after a little hesitation, quietly rose, and took her seat on Adelaide’s footstool, laying her hand on hers. The touch seemed to rouse her recollection ; for she gave a start, and a convulsive shiver, and raised herself in her chair.

‘ Nay,’ said Emma, tenderly, ‘ you have only warm friends by you, who would not hurt your feelings for the world ; it is nothing to be ashamed of—only it would not be honest to keep from you any longer that he has confided in Henry and me, as well as in Dr. Home ; and however much he may be to blame, we cannot help feeling he is to be pitied too.’

Lady Adelaide looked at her in trouble and amazement. ‘ Stay !’ she said, putting her hands for a moment before her eyes ; ‘ let me think—let me recol-

~~lost myself!~~ You bewilder me—I shall begin soon to ~~doubt my own identity,~~ or whether I am not in a fever ~~dream.~~ Why did he grieve over my illness, and why is ~~he to be~~ pitied, who has the world before him, with ~~health,~~ independence, and liberty? Why wake up the ~~dead past,~~ that cannot be too thoroughly forgotten? Why single out that unhappy period of bitterness, and ~~drag~~ into light before others the mistakes we make so ~~easily~~ and so recklessly in youth, and bear the consequences so heavily in after years? Tell him this from ~~me,~~ Dr. Home—tell him, Emma, when you see him ~~again~~—that all he can do for me now, if old associations ~~have~~ any force to overcome prejudice, is to meet me and think of me as a stranger; and let those old days be ~~as if~~ they had never been. Would to Heaven they never had!

She paused with a heavy sigh: her friends watched her in silence, not knowing how to answer without the risk of increasing her agitation. It was too late to regret the introduction of the subject; the kindest thing, now the mischief was done, seemed to be to encourage her to speak freely; but it was some little time before she did—she sat with her eyes fixed on the fire, as earnestly as if reading in the embers those pages of bygone life she so vainly would have blotted out.

When she spoke again, however, it was with the composure of a settled resolution, and her voice had resumed its naturally gentle tone.

‘I did not think,’ she said, ‘that I should ever allude to those times again to any living being. But small as may be the amount of your esteem which I possess, I cannot afford to lose it; and having already heard so

much, it is necessary you should hear more. You shall know all, and then judge for yourselves, whether it is unjustifiable pride on my part that makes me shrink from being beholden to Mr. Randolph.

‘His face, his image, his name—not the image, not the name by which we know him now, for the one is not more changed than the other—are linked in my memory with some of my happiest days. When I knew him first, I was hardly more than a child, and he was already a man, and a superior one; as far above me, in my estimation, as if he had been a Newton or a Davy. I was sent to General Conway’s house after the death of a dear and amiable governess, who had lived with me since I was eight years old; and as my mother at that time was too much occupied with the immense amount of business, political and otherwise, that devolved upon her in her position, to be able to devote much attention to me, I became by degrees a constant visitor at my uncle’s for months at a time, and the finishing of my education gradually fell into the hands of his favourite secretary. This, I conclude, he has told you already. How far it was wise or right, I dare not now attempt to judge: I had no voice in it, and after awhile, was happier there than anywhere else.

‘I had had many instructors of one kind and another, in the different accomplishments acquired by girls of my age; but since my first recollections of my mother’s teaching, in itself unlike anything I ever met with afterwards, I had never known what it was to be under the influence of a really superior mind. His richly stored understanding developed mine, I knew not how: he seemed at once to communicate knowledge and to create the faculty of receiving it, and the craving for more.

I had learned from others by routine—he roused my reasoning powers, and my ambition to excel; directed my taste, tempered my judgment, and without any forcing or unhealthy stimulus, led me to find my highest gratification in intellectual pursuits. You must excuse this egotism; it is necessary for the explanation of what followed. Indeed, it seems so long ago to look back upon, that I feel as if I were telling, not my own history, but that of some one dead—of whom I would have you judge, not so much by what she was, as by what she might have been!

‘Whatever he may have said or thought of *me*, let me render this testimony to *him*—he never wilfully betrayed his trust, or attempted to make an unworthy use of his influence. His behaviour to me was marked with a respect and deference that served, it may be, unawares, to nourish and strengthen that besetting sin, of which,’ laying her hand on the rector’s, ‘I have been warned so faithfully. Admiring his abilities, as I did, with all the enthusiasm of sixteen, his homage and friendship appeared a personal distinction, raising me in my own eyes, and in those of others. For we had gradually grown from master and pupil to the affection and confidence of friends; and as friends we rode and walked, and studied together, and passed such happy hours, as I should hardly dare to recal, were it not, as I told you before, that it sounds to me now like a story of the dead.

‘There was no one to warn me, or even to see my danger. When I was at home, I saw but little of my mother, who, satisfied to find me improving, had no time to inquire more. I had not been accustomed to confide in her, often as I longed for the privilege; and so my romantic friendship with Mr. Gray, though it

was the subject of all my day-dreams, and I was often yearning to be assured of her sympathy and approval, was never known to her at all.

‘The rude awakening came last. First, my cousin, Miss Conway, who had all along been a sharer in my studies, as well as in my intimacy, and had, indeed, enjoyed his friendship longer than I had, began to show signs of dissatisfaction and irritability when she saw us together, for which I could not account. I comprehended afterwards, that her better knowledge of the world made her foresee the difficulties of our peculiar position; but with the wilfulness of young ignorance, I thought it was only caprice, and laughed at it accordingly. My visions were then of a brilliant future, devoted to literature and science, and the patronage of struggling genius, with Maurice Gray raised to eminence by my aid—drawing inspiration from my influence, and giving me strength and support by his. But as time went on, and I was nearly seventeen, a change came over him still more perplexing than my cousin’s. He seemed to avoid my company—to try not to speak to me—to study coldness of manner—and the more I endeavoured to win back his former kindness, the stranger his behaviour grew. Till at last it was all explained; one day in June—’

She paused, and looked inquiringly, half fearfully, at her companions.

‘Go on,’ said Dr. Home, gently; ‘we know to what you allude; but we have only heard one side. Let me just say this first—that considering the force of the temptation, I do not see how the poor lad could have acted better, than to sacrifice everything for his own honour and your peace.’

‘I admit it all,’ she said; ‘I have long done so : but I could not *then*. Conceive, if you can, an inexperienced, impetuous girl, whose very ignorance made her terror the greater, being told the encouragement she had given him had become so marked, and the attachment she had shown so unmistakeable, that being as unable from inclination, as he was prohibited by honour, from availing himself of her weakness, he had no alternative but to resign his situation. Conceive this said to me, by my own cousin, who had heard it from himself, and who added her own terrible testimony, that she had seen it already, and tried to prevent it, in vain. I dare not attempt to describe the effect of her words. To me it seemed nothing short of indelible disgrace. What I had said or done to give rise to such a charge, I could not tell : I only knew it had never occurred to me for a moment, and *he*, at least, ought to have known me better. And when, in the very height of my agony of mind, he himself appeared before me, and my cousin, with a sarcastic remark, left us together, I can just remember, that between shame, indignation, and grief, I spoke passionately—bitterly—as to an enemy who had insulted my whole race in my person ; I forget the words I used ; I only felt that I hated him, and was resolved he should see it. What he said, I could not, would not heed, till I suddenly found he was protesting his devotion to *me*—to *me*, whom he had held up to my own scorn, as well as his ! I broke from him with a word of contemptuous defiance, which he has never yet forgiven—and never will.

‘He left us that day, and for many years I saw him no more. But the injury he had done me was irreparable. My cousin, whose kindness at that time was

unwearied, assured me no one but herself knew, or ever should know the cause of his departure. It would kill my mother, she said, to be told the truth; and she pictured the effect of such a discovery on all my friends so vividly, that I was over-persuaded, and stooped to my first concealment. Oh! may I be forgiven! It was that first deviation from openness that prepared the way for the last.

‘From that time I was another being. A distaste for every pursuit connected with the remembrance of Maurice Gray drove me to find resources in objects I had formerly despised. I believe I had grown rather into the habit of looking down upon others for being fond of dress and amusement; but now I was only anxious to escape from the dreariness within; and as my friends were eager to promote my pleasure, before I was actually out in the world I was allowed to attend some gay parties with my cousin. At one of these it was I first met *him* on whom I brought exile, danger, and death. Your husband, Emma, will tell you what he was. It is only those who knew him who can be indulgent to me; who can understand what, in the condition my mind was in at the time, was the magical influence of that passionate devotion, pleading in every feature, glowing in every word and look—of love, and courage, and ardour, breathing from a face that no one could ever resist—so bright, so eager, so affectionate—’

Her voice failed her; she could not go on. Dr. Home’s eyes filled, as he stroked her hand in token of sympathy.

‘Poor thing, poor thing!’ he repeated, several times. ‘I always thought you were more to be pitied than blamed.’

‘Perhaps so,’ said she, struggling to recover her voice; ‘but there is room enough for blame, pity me as you will. Had I been in a healthier frame of mind—had I not already suffered the loss of self-esteem—had I not yielded to the temptation of concealment from my best friend—I might have been saved from my last act of imprudence. But I seemed at that time to be hurried along, I knew not how, by passions and influences against which I had no defence; the only one that could have protected, I had not then learned to seek. Then came my mother’s grave, disapproving looks—her serious remonstrances—her stern command to see him no more; and but for my cousin, I should not have dared to disobey. But she was warmly interested in our cause—she pitied, consoled, encouraged us both; she saw Walter privately, and urged him to persevere, and me to be patient; and was, from first to last, our sympathizing friend. It was from her I learnt why his regiment was ordered to India; and through her instrumentality we had that interview which decided my fate. It was she, too, who encouraged me to believe that my mother’s sense of the family dignity and honour would induce her, when the deed was done, to pardon and receive us. All her best offices were promised on our behalf, and by her active help, the arrangements for the secret marriage were finally made.

‘Here, before you both, as I have often before God, I own my sin, for it was great. And step by step, with the transgression came the punishment it deserved. The hourly humiliation of the deceit I found myself compelled to practise—the terror of the morning flight—the dread of pursuit and capture—the shame of hear-

ing Henry's brave remonstrance, his first kindness to me, who owe him so much—all were misery enough in themselves ; but nothing to equal that moment after the ceremony, when I saw my mother's face, and read my sentence—never since repealed !

‘ I have little more to tell you. My life in India was only what other officers' wives had to encounter, and I had many merciful deliverances. Sorrow, heavy, bitter sorrow, darkened my path—but so it did to others, who deserved it less. Nothing has prospered with me, nothing will, till that silent curse is removed ; but I have always met with friends, and might, perhaps, have had more, had I learned Dr. Home's lesson a little earlier. During all those years, I never heard of Mr. Gray, and when he was introduced to me a few weeks ago in this house, by another name, he was so much altered, I did not recollect him for some time. When I did, my first sensation was that of pleasure, and my first impulse to greet him warmly ; but the bitter look he gave reminded me of that with which we parted, and told me my words were neither forgotten nor forgiven. In the short conversation that we had that evening, he was harsh, almost cruel ; and the depth to which by my conduct I had sunk in his esteem, struck me so painfully, that, as the rector knows, I disturbed the peace of the whole party, by one of those attacks of faintness to which I have been, of late years, rather subject. I could not tell you all, sir, *then* ; but your kindness I shall never forget ; no, nor the words you said, nor the agony of the night that followed.’

The agony did not seem to have quite passed away, judging by the quivering lips with which she recalled it ; and for a few minutes she leaned back, with closed

eyes, in silence. Rousing herself, however, by an effort, while her companions were hesitating what to do, she turned to the rector. 'Tell me, sir, now you have heard so much, is it strange that your friend should not be mine?'

Dr. Home scarcely required Emma's warning glance to put him on his guard against causing renewed agitation. Enough had been risked already, and he was only anxious to close the subject and leave her to repose.

'Without entirely agreeing with you, as to the impossibility of such a thing, I may say this for your comfort—that according to your means of judging, it is quite natural you should feel as you do. If Maurice had begun by sneering at my church and parish, because he might have seen better, it would have gone uncommonly against the grain with me to accept his new school-house. You have a right to expect he should clear himself of contempt; and I have a right to ask you to suspend judgment, till *you*, in turn, have heard the other side. You are exhausted now, with talking, and I shall leave you; we can renew the subject another time when you have recovered your strength. Your confidence is not misplaced, and I thank you for it; and still more for the manner in which you have borne my plain speaking. Rest now, and be assured that to those who can simply *trust*, all things work together for good—even their own mistakes and errors. I shall send you the second part of my sermon,' he added, in a low voice, as he shook hands with more than his usual kindness, 'for you have so thoroughly mastered the first, it is only fair you should be reminded, as you have reminded *me*—that He who "resisteth the proud," also "giveth grace to the humble."' "

CHAPTER V.

But, O!—
 What shall I say to *thee*, Lord Scroop—?
 SHAKESPEARE.

‘MY dear Mrs. Marsden, I am come up to persuade you to venture out for a drive; my aunt is waiting for you in the carriage. Now, do be bold and venturesome for once, and never mind the doctors; the air is so mild, the trees in the Park are all in full bud, and you will be well much sooner than if you stay shut up like this.’

It was never very difficult to argue Mrs. Marsden into any measure that did not give her too much trouble, so long as you took care to have the last word; and Miss Conway knew this pretty well by experience. The prudential admonitions of medical advisers would have kept her in without much remonstrance till mid-summer; but she had no power of resistance against urgent persuasion to venture out in Lent. So after piling on a sufficient quantity of wraps to defy even the vicissitudes of a British spring, she allowed herself to be installed by Lady Delaunay’s side—whose active, delicate form contrasted as strongly with the good-tempered, indolent heaviness of her companion, as did

Miss Conway's sharply defined features, and keenly anxious expression, with the fresh round cheeks, and glances, half shy, half saucy, of Lilla Brittan, when they were left alone. Miss Conway's impatience would not suffer her to wait for voluntary information. She examined all the doors to insure security against listeners, and then began eagerly.

'Well, my dear, what have you heard? I have been despairing of ever finding you alone. Now we are safe for a couple of hours at least. Tell me, have you seen or heard anything lately of Mr. Randolph?'

'He called after he came back from the country; and said he was in town on business, but meant soon to go into —shire for a few days. I have not seen him since.'

'Have you heard anything more about those papers?'

'Well, I am pretty sure he brought them back with him. I was sent out of the room, but I only went into the next, you know, and that inner door is not always shut.'

'You are a clever little creature, I know *that*. And what did you happen to overhear, by chance?'

'By chance, as you say, I just caught part of the conversation—that trumpet is a charming invention, to be sure. He said it was very disagreeable to him to have such an office, and nothing but respect for somebody's last wishes would have induced him to accept it; but he should be very glad if the proper person were at hand to see justice done—or something of that sort. You know one cannot catch all the words, and I am sure one cannot remember them.'

'Certainly not; you are very ingenious to manage

as you do. Was anything said about any missing papers ?’

‘Yes ; he seemed very sorry, and it was their loss that had delayed his bringing back the others ; but he still hoped they would be recovered. Meanwhile, it was for her to decide what she wished done. She took it all very easily, as she does most things ; and it ended, I imagine, in nothing being done just at present ; they are to wait for somebody—I don’t know who.’

‘Was anything said to give you an idea to what the papers referred ?’

Lilla hesitated ; the question was repeated in a more imperative tone.

‘Well, he said something about treachery and deceit ; he did not mention names—exactly.’

‘You are quite sure of that ?’ said Miss Conway, looking steadily in her face.

‘Quite sure ; or if he did, what is it to me ? I have nothing to do with all these secrets, and what is more, I hate them. I was in such a fright all the time that somebody would come in, and catch me listening. If Lady Delaunay knew, she would never trust me again.’

‘Probably not, so I trust she never may. So long as I am your friend, my dear, you need not be uneasy on that score. Do you happen to know where the writing-case is, in which those papers were kept ?’

‘Not very far off. Just behind the big Bible there.’

‘And where is the key ?’

Miss Brittan knew it hung on a ring with several others, as she had often had to hunt for them, as well as for Mrs. Marsden’s spectacles, thimble, and any other stray article that she happened to have laid down

for a minute ; but where they were at that time, was more than the most sagacious mind could take upon itself to divine in a hurry. She, for one, didn't know, and didn't care. Spurred on, however, by her imperious companion, she searched in every available corner, and found them at the bottom of a basket of Berlin wool, which the old lady had been turning over that morning.

'We had better take off the one we want, and put back the others, in case of accident,' said Miss Conway.

'Don't say *we* want it, for I don't at all. And suppose it is missed before we can put it back ?'

'That is unlikely ; I know where my aunt is gone, and they are safe for an hour longer, at least,' argued Miss Conway, as having slipped off the key, she proceeded to open the desk. As she expected, two packets were there, but Randolph had carefully sealed them up when he returned them, and there is sufficient conventional sacredness about a seal to make a conscience hesitate, that would think nothing of turning a key, or untying a string. She sat with them in her hand a few minutes, pondering what was to be done ; but the reflection that if there *were* any of her own letters there, she had at least as good a right as anybody to see them, decided the question ; and desiring Lilla to guard the door, she lighted a taper, melted the wax of the envelopes with the skill of a practised hand, and was soon absorbed in the contents. Lilla Brittan, to whom the whole of this proceeding appeared as objectionable as perilous, watched her with considerable curiosity, and had ample leisure for revolving the practical lesson just received, during the next three-

quarters of an hour—for her companion had forgotten her existence.

Oh ! those old letters ! they are trying enough to turn over when written by other people—but what when they are our own ? The hasty words that flew from the pen, as the sparks on the flinty highway beneath the dashing hoof, in prompt revenge of some wrong that now we can hardly recal ;—the fervent yearnings of divided affection, only consoled for absence by that silent, patient medium—watched for, welcomed, wept over when received ; a chain that linked two hearts despite all space—*now*, the sole memorial that they were ever linked at all !—the visions that have faded, the promises that have been broken, the troubles that we thought we could never live through, the schemes of happiness that were then our world—how they look up upon us from the past, like those dead faces that have lain unchanged in the tomb, and present to the gazer who first opens it, a momentary image of reality—that, even as he gazes, crumbles away into dust !

And well if the half-forgotten record chronicle nothing worse than spent anger and altered love ; than tears wiped away, and gladness gone ! But if our own hands have graven with an iron pen a testimony of the evil within us—if treachery, meanness, falsehood, which seemed *then* so safe, so advantageous, rise in accusing shapes to convict us by proofs of our own showing, terrible indeed are those dry bones, which the breath of God can revive, to stand up an avenging army ! And so Miss Conway felt, the instant she became aware that her worst fears were confirmed.

The first letter she opened was addressed to the General by her former confidential friend, requesting

him, as a matter of justice, to read what she enclosed ; she had ascertained how she had been misrepresented, and in self-defence she sent evidence which she thought must prove satisfactory ; but if not, which she was prepared to confirm and amplify, on the slightest intimation that such was his wish.

The evidence in question lay before her—partly in extracts—partly in whole letters copied—partly in the originals themselves ; and accompanied by occasional explanatory remarks, to connect the whole together, and make it intelligible. It was certainly very cleverly done. More than once, in reading them over, Miss Conway's heart beat faster with the momentary expression, 'I never could have written *that* !' and when this was impossible to maintain, even to herself, a bitter self-reproach stung her, that with all her vicissitudes, all her knowledge of human nature, all her skill in managing others, she could have been so weak, so blind, as to put herself so far into anybody's power. She did not perhaps know, or at least did not consider, in how many instances she had been enabled to keep up the necessary appearances with others, from having relieved her mind by an appeal to that sympathy, which the most self-reliant cannot do entirely without ; she only felt the bitterness of detection made more bitter still by being betrayed, which treacherous people like as little when it comes home to them as the most honest.

There they were, as they had met her kind and unsuspecting guardian's astonished eyes—her favourite schemes for securing his fortune—her plans for the quiet disposal of Mrs. Marsden—her spirited satirical sketches of their style of life and society, sparing

nobody, but her uncle's intimate friends least of all—her sneers at the new secretary, gradually warming into praise and admiration—her jealousy, perceptible from the first, of the beauty and popularity of her youthful cousin—all explained, and made clear in packet No. 1, like the opening chapters of a well-conceived tale.

As she replaced them in their envelope, she drew a long, deep breath.

'I could not have believed it! And *he* to see all this! And there may be worse yet—the wickedness of that woman surpasses everything I ever knew!'

She had no time to investigate the point any further; Lilla gave notice of a visitor's step on the stairs, and she had only time to hurry both packets into her muff, lock the desk, and fling the key to her confederate—who darted with it into the next room—before the door opened, and Mr. Randolph walked in.

The instant Miss Conway looked in his face, she recognised the same look, altered as the outward features were, that she had seen on it last when he left her uncle's house so many years ago. Conscience made a coward of her, in spite of herself; and she had hardly presence of mind enough to pay him the customary greeting, and regret that Mrs. Marsden was not at home.

'My visit is to Miss Conway,' he replied, quickly; 'I heard when I called just now in — Street, that you were most likely here; and my business being urgent, I took the liberty of following you.'

'I hope to give a good account of yourself, Mr. Randolph? I understand you came to town a fortnight ago, and never let us know of your return.'

‘I was very much occupied with important business, Miss Conway, and have been several days in ——shire, whence I am only just returned.’

‘What a thing it is to be a traveller! You make no more of your two or three hundred of miles every other day, than I should of driving round the Park. Have you begun your famous school yet in that place—what did you say the name was?’

‘I never mentioned it that I am aware of; but if it is interesting to you to know, Miss Conway, it is Cannymoor; and it is on account, moreover, of some communications from thence, which I found awaiting my return to town, that I am here at this moment. Can you spare me a few minutes’ private conversation?’

Her cheeks glowed with a sudden thrill of hope; she glanced, half-fearfully, half-encouragingly, in his face, which was much calmer now than on his first entrance. Her mind darted hastily over the scale of probabilities. If those two had met again to renew their hostilities, and her letter to Adelaide had rendered it not unlikely—on whose sympathy would he rely as on hers? If through the revelations of those letters he had been made aware of some of the feelings with which his society had inspired her, might it not have occurred to him, that with her lay the best compensation for her rival’s contempt and scorn? Was it possible that happiness was opening for her, just when despaired of most? Oh, if it were so, how indifferent would those matters become that absorbed her now!—all her petty schemes and plots and contrivances—even her jealousy and aversion—she could throw them all by, and feel nothing but peace and charity with all the world. It was a glimpse of Canaan from the desert—that desert of

disappointment and joylessness to which her own free choice had condemned her all her life, and which, at that moment, in contrast with that land of smiling promise, appeared before her in more than its usual barrenness and desolation. When would he speak? It was but a few minutes that he paused, but they might have been hours for their intensity of feeling. What *his* emotions were, she could not fathom; but when he did speak, his voice was unusually low and deliberate.

‘When I was in your uncle’s house, Miss Conway, did I ever commit any wrong towards you? Did I ever presume on the courtesy shown me, or the advantages of my position, and in any way violate your confidence, or wound your feelings? Answer me as if on oath!’

‘As if on oath,’ she replied, smiling and colouring, ‘you never did—never.’

‘When I left my situation for the reasons I told you of, was I acting honourably, and as I ought, or not?’

‘Like a man of honour; like yourself. My uncle and I never spoke of you or your conduct without the warmest respect and regard.’

‘If then, when I found my actions, my intentions, my words, perverted and misunderstood, I carried away with me the burning sense of injury and shame, that could only be relieved by the humiliation of the offender—was I right, or was I wrong?’

‘Indeed, Mr. Randolph, if I cannot conscientiously say it was right, it was so natural, I cannot call it wrong; and no one has felt and sympathized with you more deeply—more earnestly—than I have done.’

'Is it an injury to be blotted out and forgiven, or not?'

'Indeed, I dare not say it is.'

'No, you are right, Miss Conway. Such an injury to one who only endeavoured, as in God's sight, to do what was right by you all, was indeed a piece of heartlessness, that it would require a divine nature to pardon—and such is not mine. And therefore I am here to tell you, face to face, what if you were but a man, you should acknowledge to me—that false as you are in thought, in principle, and in word, you are as far beneath my vengeance, as you are unworthy my esteem!'

Miss Conway recoiled involuntarily, stricken dumb by the indignation that blazed from every feature of his face. She held up her hands in terror, as if to keep off the words that were worse than a blow; but the long-suppressed passion could not now be kept back.

'I am come to tell you, however unaccustomed you may be to such plain speaking, that *you*, a Christian gentlewoman—in whose veins runs such brave and honourable blood as should in itself have cried shame on your conduct—*you*, knowing what I did, and why I did it, and what it cost me to do it at all—you dared to tell that innocent and unsuspecting being, that I had spoken of her with indulgent, contemptuous pity, as the victim of an imprudent and unreturned attachment to myself, which compelled me to leave the house at once. You dared to tell her this—silence!—we are not now meeting on social or on equal terms, but as injurer and injured—accuser and accused—and it is for me to speak, and you to hear! You told her this—knowing

that every word I could say would only madden her resentment higher—that every token of that resentment would be a wound in my heart's core—and that thus we should be severed for ever, each writhing under the sense of wrong. You did all this—for what end is best known to yourself; and you succeeded. You injured us both in a manner you can never repair; you made me believe I had been deluded into trusting an angelic exterior with a heart of stone; that her friendship was but the caprice of the hour, to be dropped at the first touch of conventional pride; that she had gratified her vanity by my weakness, only to scorn me for its folly. Oh! what a life of bitterness has that one thought caused me! And *her*—I dare not think on her share of the injury. I might forget myself, and become degraded in my own eyes. I relieve you now of my presence. Our past friendship is forgotten—our pleasant associations are as if they had never been. Would that the evil you have done could be wiped out as easily!’

He turned to leave the room; but Miss Conway, who had crouched beneath his denunciations, with her face in her hands, now started up with a cry of anguish. ‘Maurice!—Maurice Gray! hear me in my own defence!’

He paused irresolutely; she sprang between him and the door, the tears streaming from her eyes, as she extended her arms to bar his passage. He had never seen her so agitated before; the agony of her feelings had thrown down every barrier of pride or reserve, and the wild emotion of the woman burst forth as passionately as his own.

‘You taunt, you condemn, you reproach me—and I own with reason. It is vain now to deny it—I did all

you say ; and I have added one more untruth to those laid to my charge, in professing you have done me no wrong. Maurice Randolph, you have been the worst enemy I ever knew ! You came to the home where I lived—you forced me, against my will, to care for you—you taught me tastes, pursuits, ambition, I never thought of before ; and then, when my regard was fully won, and the friend who loved me best, himself believed in and approved its return, you let yourself be dazzled by a younger face, a more brilliant exterior ; and on her who never cared for anything but her own praises and caprices, you flung away the devotion of your life ; and what became of *me*, you never paused to think ! Yes, look as you will ! despise me as you will ! you have made me despise myself, and the world, and you—and I must speak now or die. *Why* did I tell Adelaide that false tale of which you accuse me so bitterly, but because I knew she was not worthy your regard, and that nothing but a conviction of the fact would work your cure ? It was wrong, but I was maddened into it, as I am maddened now into this confession—which, however low it may sink me in your opinion, should lower yourself deeper still !

She leaned against the wall with these words, and sobbed so long and so hysterically, he could not, in ordinary humanity, forbear rendering her assistance. Supported on his arm, almost fainting, she was enabled to reach the sofa, and he stood quietly by her side till her agitation was somewhat abated. His gentleness revived something like hope in her bosom ; she looked up to thank him, and murmured, 'Forgive me !' at which he turned his head away.

'I have no wish to increase your present distress,' he said, gravely. 'The charge you bring against me is a

serious one. If I have been the unhappy cause of error on your part, I too must ask to be forgiven. But one thing I must hear explained at once; and that is, in what manner, in what instance, did your cousin prove herself unworthy your esteem—or mine?’

There was a visible hesitation; a brief but sharp struggle in Miss Conway’s mind before answering; one of those periods in life when the good and the evil angel whisper at the same moment—and the rising or falling of the moral nature depends on the contest’s issue. Perhaps, had she had time to consider whether there might not be evidence existing which would controvert her assertions, prudence might have turned the scale in favour of truth; but she was hurried on by the desperation of jealous dread.

‘I need seek for no stronger proof,’ she said, in a low, faltering tone, ‘than ~~the~~ circumstances of her unfortunate marriage. The imprudence, the self-will, the headstrong rebellion of her conduct during the whole proceeding—the manner in which she deceived *me* throughout—for I had done my utmost to dissuade her, and believed I had succeeded until the very morning of her flight. No one knows how I tried to save her from her own folly; at the very last, it was I who gave her mother warning, and she was only a few minutes too late. Lady Delaunay herself is my witness, that no sister could do more than I did for my unhappy cousin; but my opinion of her character was only confirmed, and my esteem was forfeited for ever.’

‘A heavy loss, indeed,’ said Randolph, ironically; then, his indignation again bursting forth beyond control; ‘out of your own lips you convict yourself, false to the core, even in your tears! *You* gave her mother

warning?—*you* were deceived into the belief the engagement was broken off? when it was by your own advice that she had acted, and in the firm confidence of your support and sympathy! You it was who persuaded her, when once the deed was done, her mother would forgive it—and you tell me now that to that mother you yourself betrayed her!—’

‘It is not true, it is not true, Mr. Randolph! Who is it that has so poisoned your mind against me? Is it possible you can have been so weak as to allow *her* to regain an influence—’

‘Silence!’ he said again, in a voice that made her quail; ‘silence, slanderer! your day is over—your power is past! You have helped me to the certainty of what I already conjectured, that between mother and daughter there exists but one real obstacle, and that is, your baneful mediation! Your double-dealing and treachery have kept them apart for your own ends; it is time to see what truth and justice can do. I give you fair warning, and now, plot against *me* as you please!’

It was some little time after she was left alone before Miss Conway moved. A dull, paralysing sense of wretchedness, the wretchedness of failure and detection, had crept over every nerve and fibre, and deprived her even of the power of thought. By degrees, the necessity of facing the coming peril, the sting of mortified pride, and regard despised, and the bitter desire for revenge, helped her to shake off this torpor; and then she recollected Miss Brittan, and for the first time with a pang of alarm. She opened the door into the next room; the inner one was ajar; the young lady was ensconced in an arm-chair, with a French volume in her hand, and looked up as she entered, with a demure face, in

which the anxious observer could read nothing. She yawned as she laid down the book, and remarked she was getting tired of those stories ; she did not care if she never saw another.

Something defiant in the tone of voice struck Miss Conway's quick ear. Her own became immediately pleasant and cheerful.

'Why did you not come back, my dear Lilla ? You would have been very much amused ; but perhaps you could hear us even here. We grew so hot in our argument, any one might have supposed we were quarrelling.'

'I never know the difference,' said Miss Brittan, drily. 'People generally do quarrel when they argue.'

'I dare say you wondered what it could all be about, my dear ; or were you too happy with dear Balzac to attend ?'

'I hate Balzac,' said Lilla, impatiently, pushing the book away ; 'and I wish you had never brought me any of them. They are downright wicked.'

'You are growing wonderfully particular all of a sudden, my dear.'

'It is time I did, I think.'

'High time, indeed, if this is the tone you assume with me, Lilla ; I hardly call it kind or grateful.'

'I don't think there is much to be grateful for in being lent bad books, and having to trick everybody to hide them ; I can't say I do.'

'Indeed !' said Miss Conway, fixing on her a menacing look that brought the blood to the young girl's face ; 'indeed, I am sorry to hear it.' She turned to the door with an appearance of great indignation, but paused as she was leaving the room, to observe in a milder tone, 'I may have been weak in my indulgence,

my dear Lilla, knowing how few pleasures you had ; but it is hardly *your* place to reproach me with it. However, as my regard seems of so little value, I hope you may soon meet with a more prudent—I will not say a more sincere friend. I hear my aunt's carriage. Good morning.'

And without seeming even to hear Miss Brittan's entreaty for her return, she hastened downstairs, just as Mrs. Marsden was slowly coming up—with the air of a person who had gone through immense exertion on conscientious motives, and was reaping the fruits thereof in self-complacent serenity of mind.

CHAPTER VI.

Urge me no more, I'll not be moved.
 Nor earth, nor heaven shall alter my decree ;
 Urnolph—he dies !

OLD PLAY.

THE first thing that met Lady Delaunay's eyes as she entered her own home was Mr. Randolph's card. She took it up with a strong expression of pleasure at his return, and after a few moments' consideration, sat down to write a note ; a proceeding which, in Miss Conway's anxious frame of mind, gave her more uneasiness than she would have liked to confess. Her aunt observed her looks of curiosity as she rang the bell.

'Only to ask if he can call upon me to-morrow morning, my dear. Bertram's letter to-day has decided me to lose no more time ; it is a real injustice to his tenant ; and your intelligent friend has undertaken to explain the whole case to him, with the help of a memorandum in his possession. I own I was in hopes,' she added with a sigh, 'that Delaunay would have returned by this time ; but with these new plans, there is no knowing now how long he may be away.'

'Then is he—is Mr. Randolph actually going to follow him, and at your request ?' asked Charlotte, in unutterable consternation.

‘ I could not have requested such a service, my love : but it was irresistible when offered. I have no doubt he will start immediately.’

‘ But will he—will not Delaunay think it an intrusion ?’

‘ Scarcely with my introduction, I should imagine,’ said Lady Delaunay, as she turned to deliver the note to Anderson, desiring it might be taken immediately.

Her niece durst say no more. She flew to her room, drank eau-de-Cologne and water, bathed her head and temples, till their throbbing was a little calmed down ; and then sat with clenched hands, meditating. The church clock struck. It wanted an hour to post-time. There was yet an opportunity, if she would seize it. And yet—what was she to do ?

She walked up and down the room ; stopped before the glass, and started at the haggard, terrible expression of her own face. Age seemed to have swept over every feature since the morning. She pressed her hands to her eyes, to shut out the sight ; but only to bring up a vision more fearful still—Maurice Randolph, with his indomitable energy and determination, forcing conviction upon Delaunay’s easy nature ; her deceit unmasked, her ends exposed, the brother returning as champion and advocate, the mother convinced and appeased, the daughter and her child received with open arms, the services of the chivalrous friend acknowledged by all, and the recompence of his long fidelity bestowed at last, while *she*—what was to become of her ? Was she to look on calmly at all this, while she had brain to devise, and courage to dare a remedy ? Never !

She seized writing materials, and her pen flew, as if

winged by an evil spirit. Her eyes hot and dry, her hands and feet cold, her lips swollen with the compression of her teeth—she still wrote on, what she durst not read over; sealed and directed the letter, and rang for her maid, desiring her to post it *herself* immediately.

‘Is the postage to be paid, ma’am?’ asked the latter, glancing in some surprise at the face of her mistress.

‘Oh, I forgot! Yes, certainly. There is half a sovereign; you can get some stamps with the change; be sure you put the letter in *yourself*, Forrest.’

‘Certainly, ma’am. Can I get you anything before I go?’

‘No, thank you. I have a bad headache, and shall rest till you come back. Be quick, for the letter is of importance.’

Even her own well-trained attendant’s eye was oppressive, and it was a relief to lock the door upon her and her civilities; though the rest she spoke of was to be hers no more. All she could do was to fling herself on her bed, and lie there with her back to the light till it was time to dress.

Punctual to the hour named, Randolph called the next day, and was shown into Lady Delaunay’s private boudoir. It was a small room, much plainer in its appointments than any other in the house. A few religious prints from old artists on the wall; a stand with a large oak-bound Bible; some massive, curiously carved brackets and chairs, and a writing-table of modern make after the same pattern; bookshelves carefully filled, chiefly with volumes of divinity, church history, and devotional poetry, were the principal furniture of this favourite apartment, in which Lady

Delaunay now received her visitor with more than her usual graciousness of manner, thanking him for his prompt and punctual attention to her wishes.

‘ You know the true way of doing a kindness, Mr. Randolph, and thus add to its value tenfold. But you must pay the penalty ; for people are always ready to encroach on ready good-will like yours, and I am going to ask you a favour.’

‘ That is to say, you are going to do *me* one, Lady Delaunay.’

‘ Your politeness is unanswerable. Draw your chair to the table for a moment, and be kind enough to read these over.’

She gave him a letter received the preceding day from her son, and the answer she had just written. Maurice read as he was desired, and his face brightened visibly.

‘ The sooner I start for Paris, the better, I see.’

‘ You really will ? I feel quite ashamed of asking it, but you see my predicament. I rather thought my son would have returned by this time, but as you see, he has met with some antiquarian friends, who are going to visit all the Normandy churches, and are pressing him to join them. Once engaged in an expedition of that kind, it is in vain to calculate upon his movements. I do not like his agent ; my son is sadly careless about business letters, and you are the only living witness of the promise to the present tenant. In undertaking this troublesome task, you will serve an honest, deserving man and his family, as well as me and mine, on whom I can truly say, it will be conferring lasting obligation.’

‘ And it will go hard with me,’ thought Maurice to

himself, 'if I do not find some way of doing you all a service more lasting and valuable still, little as you may dream it now.'

He did not care to tell her how exactly her plans jumped with his; but coming to the point at once, soon made all the necessary arrangements in a business-like manner, and having carefully put up his credentials, announced his purpose of starting that night.

'Fortunately, I had just completed the affairs which brought me to town. I have not been idle since I last had the honour of seeing your ladyship.'

'Ah, your school? Is it all settled? Mr. Powys was asking after you only a few days ago.'

'I think even Mr. Powys will be satisfied this time, that I am not going to work in defiance of established authority. The rector has given full consent, and the very ground for the site is promised me—besides gratuitous instruction and encouragements without end. But all this has not made me forgetful of your ladyship's pleasant but rather uncomplimentary challenge, and here I am, ready at your pleasure, to stand or fall by my bet.'

'The lace?' said Lady Delaunay, starting, as he drew out a small parcel, carefully tied up; 'I had nearly forgotten my liabilities, I confess. True, I did allow you to make a rash wager on the subject, but I am quite ready for an amicable compromise. You had better agree to draw the stakes.'

'I will agree to nothing of the kind; I'll have my bond, or there is no law in Venice; but before judgment is passed, may I ask if you remember the circumstances of the story connected with it, and the suggestions I received from you?'

'Yes; I remember telling you of a widow of the name of Dalton, living at Apswell—if that is what you mean.'

'You did, Lady Delannay, and your conjecture proved correct. I only returned from Apswell yesterday.'

She smiled, as if pleased. 'I call that real practical charity, my dear sir; many will give their money, but not their time and pains. I hope yours were not thrown away.'

'That remains to be proved; I cannot say I am sanguine, and yet I did all I could—haunted as I was by the last sight I had of the daughter's suffering and imploring face. I stayed nearly a week in the place, at an old friend's house, and saw Mrs. Dalton every day, and attacked her by every form of argument. It took some time to ascertain that she really was the person I sought; and when she became aware of my errand, she assumed the defensive in good serious earnest. First it was by a coldness so impenetrable, I might as well have tried to thaw a tunnel through an iceberg; then she warmed into resentment at any gentleman that *was* a gentleman interfering in a lone woman's family concerns, and how would gentlefolks like to have their private troubles raked up, and talked about by strangers, she would like to know? This ebullition calmed down by assurances of respect, the crust gave way a little more, and it was a relief to see her worn, gloomy face covered with tears, though it was a grief of which anger formed the principal ingredient. I found we had wronged her in one respect; the chaplain's letter from the jail never reached her; she had fled from her native parish on her daughter's com-

mittal, and left no clue by which she might be traced. The disgrace brought on her good name had crushed her to the earth, and when I appealed to her on religious grounds, I found that like one of Scott's old Covenanters, her religion had very little mercy in it—in fact, that she looked on her daughter as hopelessly lost. Here I was quite at fault—she knew much more Scripture than I did, and quoted it twice as well; and between my distaste for her doctrine, and my inability to explain a better, we should soon have been quarrelling as hotly as Greeks of the Lower Empire, when I bethought me of what Lady Delaunay had said, and as nearly as I could, repeated it word for word. I told her, as you told *me*—that to reject true repentance was to sin against the universal law; that if the whole world cast off the wanderer, her mother's arms should still be her refuge; and that in withholding the hope of improvement from a spirit that God had broken, she made herself responsible, not only for the evil it yet might do, but for the good it might have done! She seemed so startled, I left the words to take effect, without weakening their force by any of mine; and so my mission ended. The guilt remains now at her door—my hands are clean. If the heart of the penitent breaks for want of pardon, I, at least, have done my part to prevent it, and can do no more.'

A short silence followed this, for Lady Delaunay was too much struck by his manner, and the unusual emphasis laid on the concluding sentences, to offer any comment. He soon spoke again, however, in his ordinary tone, apologizing for having taken up so much of her time about a matter in which she could be so little interested; and then began deliberately to undo the fastenings of his packet.

‘Stop,’ she said, arresting this movement; ‘let me first produce mine.’ And unlocking a drawer of her writing-table, she took out an ivory box, in which some old point of rare beauty was hoarded from vulgar eyes.

‘There, sir—was I bigoted in my preference—or illiberal in my doubts? You may have seen this before, for my uncle prided himself on its rarity and value.’

And with good reason, Randolph admitted; he had only *once* seen any to equal it; but if Lady Delaunay would look at *this*—

She did look, and that as intently as if she were counting every slender thread; and when at last she raised her eyes to those of Randolph, her face was pale, and painfully contracted.

‘Where—how?’ was all she could ask; for in spite of her lion-like will, her lips quivered too much to articulate.

He calmly replied that he received it through his friend, the Rector of Cannymoor.

Lady Delaunay’s brow grew dark, and she fixed on him such a look as had made many a stout heart quail, with the sense of being read through and through. His bronzed face burnt beneath it, and its strong muscles worked with the emotion he could not entirely hide; but he stood the ordeal undauntedly, and even while her gaze was on him, he saw its keen light soften and grow dim, as the worn, dry lids drooped beneath the weight of an unutterable woe.

‘One word,’ she said, in a voice unnaturally quiet, ‘as from friend to friend. You knew what lace this was when you named it to me?’

‘I did, Lady Delaunay. I had seen it before, as well as that in your possession.’

‘Thank you for your frankness,’ said Lady Delaunay, trying to smile, with a powerful and tolerably successful effort to resume her usual composure. I am glad since it was to be so, that it should be in hands so friendly. And now, since I own myself fairly defeated, let me pay my debt. I am sure you are the last person to require of me anything I cannot with propriety perform.’

‘My request, madam, is nevertheless a bold one, and I must first stipulate that it may not offend. It is no less, since you set so much value on the lace, than to entreat your acceptance of it.’

Again she looked full at him, and there was an unusual glistening in her keen eyes.

‘You are a strange combination,’ she said, slowly. ‘Your ways are those of a courtier, but there is something behind that makes me almost afraid of you. Let me be sure you are my friend, for I should be sorry to encounter you as my foe.’

He leaned across the table—his face all one glow, and his voice tremulous with passionate earnestness.

‘Oh, Lady Delaunay! if as a friend I dared indeed to speak to you, should you have courage enough to bid me speak boldly out?’

‘Stop, sir!’ she said, in violent agitation; ‘not a word more!’

The tone was not to be disputed; he folded his arms on his chest, and his head drooped despondingly. As soon as she could command herself, she spoke again.

‘I know you mean well—well and chivalrously; I honour your intentions, and forgive your having presumed

to do what I could scarcely have forgiven under other circumstances. Forgive me in return, if I remind you, that there are wounds that quiver at the pointing of a finger. No more of that; you understand, and will bear with me. The subject will not be resumed by either of us. With regard to *this*,' she continued, pointing to the lace with a return of her former kindness of manner, 'do not forget, even in the pride of victory, that it is wiser not to drive the vanquished to extremity. Terms a shade more moderate are more likely to be faithfully carried out. You have made me thoroughly understand that there is nothing I can grant that you care to accept; but—'

'You are right, Lady Delaunay; it was a piece of presumption on my part, for which I ask forgiveness. I modify my request. Keep it at least till my return; and let it be a pledge to remind you that you owe me a boon as its redemption-price. Will you promise me this?'

'I am bound to do so; but what can you have to ask that you shrink from asking now?'

'You will know in due time; *now* it would be of little use. Perhaps I wish to deserve it more.'

He rose as he spoke, and stood before her.

'Lady Delaunay, I may fail in my errand, but if I do, it will not be for want of trying what zeal and earnestness can do. Bid me God speed, and in the strength of that blessing let me go!'

She held out her hand, and as he bent over it, pressed his warmly.

'An old woman's blessing,' she said, with a gentle but grave smile, 'is often the best service she can offer; and since you are not too proud to accept it, be

assured it is yours. God prosper your way, and direct your path, and bring you safely back to claim the grateful thanks of those whom you so kindly serve !'

As the door closed on his retiring footsteps, a sigh of exhaustion escaped from Lady Delaunay ; the carefully guarded features relaxed, and her hands dropped feebly on the paper before her. The tears gathered slowly in her eyelids, and, one by one, fell on Adelaide's lace—those tears that cost old age so much, wrung from sources wellnigh spent, and tracing in the cheek those lines which, if not quickly kissed away by affection, can never more be smiled away by joy. Unrelenting in purpose—fixed in her resolution not to yield one step till the rebellious head was in the dust before her—there was yet bursting from her soul's innermost a cry of bitter anguish, like David's of old over the lost and hardened Absalom ; and could her death but have made her daughter what she had hoped once to see her, she too would have joined in that vain yearning, ' Would God I had died for thee !'

The lace was returned to its envelope ; the letters, the accounts, were all thrust aside ; the mother's heart was too sick to attend to anything. She went to the stand where her large Bible lay always ready, and sought for comfort there.

For years she had been giving her strength, her substance, her intellect to God's service ; rising early, constant in His temple—denying herself luxuries that she might have more to give—seeking Him with all her heart and soul, as she believed—and yet, in her hours of solitude, the long-sought light of His countenance—where was it ? Strong sense of duty, high,

unflinching principle, marked every step she took in life; when the eye saw her, it blessed her, and when the ear heard her, it bore witness to her; why could she not find the rest that remaineth to the people of God? Why was she ever opening and studying the Book of Life, and yet ever turning unsatisfied away?

It was a question she had often asked, and no answer had ever come. There was something lacking, and she knew not what. The promises, the consolations, the stores of strength and peace, were all before her, and yet she was weary and heavy laden—disappointed and lonely in heart; and the living spring that quickened thousands, to her seemed like Marah's waters. So it was now; and after awhile, she closed the Bible with another heavy sigh, accepting, as she had before, the trial of her faith and courage. An old quaint volume of divinity lay near at hand, and as she mechanically turned the pages, the first text that arrested her eye was—'*Yet doth He devise means that His banished be not expelled from Him.*'

She dropped the book; and bowed her grey head on her hands.

'Come, there is still some comfort left. There are wanderers I can reach—hearts I can touch—young feet I can keep from going astray—and so that His work be done, what matters it whether it be in darkness or in light?'

And as she had often done before, in similar times of depression, she went immediately about some of her numerous errands of mercy, and was engaged with them the greater part of the day.

CHAPTER VII.

Where is she gone? Haply, despair hath seized her—

SHAKESPEARE.

A VISIT to the City—another to the Foreign Office—and a third to the Rev. Mr. Powys, consumed so much of the afternoon, that it was past five when Randolph strode into Henry Lyndon's chambers. The busy lawyer could have wished him anywhere else at that moment, but a glance showed him there was sound cause for the interruption. Maurice had pulled out a document, more or less intelligible, and showed it significantly.

'I was right, you see.'

'Passport, eh? Whence, and when?'

'Paris *via* Dover and Calais, to-night.'

'To find whom?'

'As I told you—Bertram, fifth Earl Delaunay—Viscount Chester—lineal descendant of Rollo, and so forth. My credentials are here, and it will go hard with me if I do not beat a little more truth into his illustrious Norman understanding, than it has ever dreamed of yet.'

'It is no hard matter to get the truth in—to keep

it there is another thing. I wish you joy of the task. How did you succeed to-day elsewhere ?'

'Don't speak of it. I made a mistake on impulse—but I moved her, in spite of herself. She is a grand creature, blinded, as the best of us are at times. But her eyes shall be opened, if I live. And that reminds me—I want you to make my will.'

'Are you such a timid sailor as that comes to, that you make your will before you cross the Channel ?'

'Not quite ; but no one knows what may happen ; and my mind will be easier. Here is an outline of my wishes ; can you get it done for me in time ?'

'You may well ask ; it is wonderful what consciences the general public have. Let me look over your memorandum. "Legacies, Sophia Home, school-house at Cannymoor"—humph ! Adelaide what ? Ball ? Who is the lady, may I presume to ask ?'

'A Cannymoor godchild. There, go on ; no criticising.'

'Come, this is more to the point. "Emma, daughter of Henry and Emma Lyndon." Don't mention it, my dear fellow—the will shall be ready in time, with all the pleasure in life, for I can tell you for your comfort, we are going to have a change of weather. You are just in time for the equinoctial gales.'

'I am gale-proof by this time, so don't flatter yourself ; but go on.'

'"Residuary legatee, Walter Lyndon." It is well to be him. You are determined that high-spirited lady shall be obliged to you when you are dead, if not when you are living.'

'I have done her quite enough wrong, Lyndon, to be glad of even a reversionary prospect of amends. If

I live, that boy shall never want a friend and defender ; if I die, he is provided for. Meanwhile, will you accept the office of his trustee and my executor ?'

'Certainly, my dear fellow ; and considering the rate at which I live, compared with your robust organization, I may promise a dozen such services without much risk.'

'Then I am satisfied. One thing more. If you are in want of an ally during my absence, here is the address of one who is much interested in the cause—Mr. Powys, of St. Nathaniel's ; I have just seen him, and he is ready and willing to help, whenever he has opportunity. He is much respected by Lady Delaunay ; and the way they skirmish occasionally is pleasant to see.'

'May I live to see it, so the victory be secure. The more allies we have the better. What shall I say when I write to Cannymoor ?'

'Tell your kind and amiable wife, if you will, what I am going to do. Tell her, I owe her a great deal already ; I shall owe her still more, if she will comply with my request, not to attempt any explanation with Lady Adelaide on the subject of that terrible misunderstanding, which I dare not think of now. Foul play there has been, and she shall know it ; but not till it has been atoned for. When I return, if I *do* return successful, let me at least have that to plead. I long, I thirst for her pardon ; but it must be spoken by her own lips. You are quite sure she is recovering ?'

'You saw my wife's account, that she has been out several times, and is fast regaining strength. So much for your scepticism about doctors.'

‘I will never abuse another. Poisoning shall be a science, wholesale murder enlightened philanthropy, Ousel shall be a Mozart, and Spindler an angel in human form. By the way, I heard a report to-day about that bank into which the money was paid to your uncle’s account, that I did not like. My friend did not believe it, but you might as well be on your guard. If all be true that Ousel told me, the sooner that business is settled, the better it will be for all parties.’

‘I am quite of your mind there; thank you for the hint. And now if you want *your* business done, you must be kind enough to go.’

‘And so,’ wrote Henry to his wife, the next day, ‘he is gone on as well-meant a Quixotic errand as ever man undertook, and which, if ever there was a man likely to accomplish, that man is himself. I am inclined to agree with him, that it will be much better not to attempt any explanations with Lady Adelaide. The case is so complicated, and the parties concerned are so peculiar to deal with, that a third person interposing is as likely to make mischief as not. So whatever romantic visions you and the rector may have been indulging in, I must beg you to lay aside; and let our friend speak for himself, when he has clearly made up his mind what he means to say. I am much mistaken if he is not aiming pretty high; but I have been mistaken before, and may be so again.

‘My curiosity was rather excited last evening, and my night’s rest suffered in consequence. Randolph put up at the Waterloo, on his return from ——shire; and after seeing him start for the station, and resting

myself in the coffee-room for ten minutes or so, I was just coming out, when I heard a servant in the Delaunay livery anxiously inquiring if Mr. Randolph was still there, as he had a note to deliver to him. Of course it was rather too late, but whether Jeames was to blame or not, I cannot say. For his own sake, I hope not, which is generous on my part, considering how he kept me awake.'

The cause of the above incident was indeed one that the lawyer would have been clever to guess. The servant had been ordered to make all possible haste, and had he obeyed, would have been in time; but choosing to think there was no great hurry, he had the pleasure of returning to say he was just too late. It had struck Miss Conway, during their *tête-à-tête* dinner, that her aunt, whom she had scarcely seen before all day, was unusually grave and thoughtful; and though she knew her too well not to be confident that if anything to her discredit had been insinuated by Maurice Randolph, Lady Delaunay would have instantly summoned her to speak in her own defence, still, anxious and harassed, she dreaded she knew not what, and every moment increased her nervousness. When Anderson came in, bringing back the note, to say Mr. Randolph was already gone, she turned so white her aunt must have observed it, had she not been already so pre-occupied.

'Let the carriage be round at nine o'clock,' was all Lady Delaunay said, and quietly resumed her work.

'Are you going out to-night?' asked Miss Conway, when she could do so without betraying discomposure.

‘Only for an hour or so ; I am sorry to leave you alone, my dear Charlotte, but I want a little conversation with Mrs. Marsden.’

The manner in which this was said, forbade further questioning ; Miss Conway swallowed her curiosity, and passed the time as best she could. It required some courage to bear such solitude as hers. Her aunt, however, returned sooner than she had expected, and evidently so much disturbed, as to be glad to confide her trouble to her much-trusted companion.

‘When I was out this afternoon,’ she said, ‘it suddenly occurred to me that a letter on business, which I wrote last night, had not been sent to the post. I was not sure whether I might not have left it out ; but directly I came in, I inquired, and as none had been seen, went to look in my boudoir. Unfortunately, papers do accumulate so fast in spite of all precaution, that it took me some time to hunt in the drawers of my writing-table, and all to no purpose, till I recollected the one I seldom open, but which I had certainly opened this morning, to show Mr. Randolph my point lace ; and there I found the letter. I was just closing the drawer, when I thought I saw something that did belong to me, and half hidden by some tracts (which I remember buying some little time ago, and wondering what had become of them) was a discoloured packet, apparently of letters—sealed, and endorsed in a handwriting that I could not but recognise—“Private Papers, No. 3.”’

Miss Conway’s eyes glittered, but she waited to hear more.

‘I was aware from himself, that Mr. Randolph was in possession of some of my uncle’s papers, entrusted to

him by Mrs. Marsden ; and at first I thought he might have left them to-day by mistake. I tried, however, to recal when I had opened that drawer ; and at last, recollected doing so the day I met Mr. Randolph first. The argument we had in the carriage about point-lace put it into my head, when I came home, to take out and examine mine ; and I remember now, perfectly, that finding it was later than I had supposed, I hastily threw the tracts and some other papers lying on the table, into the same drawer ; and I suppose, this same packet with them—by whatever means it got there.’

Miss Conway made a mechanical gesture of agreement.

‘I wrote at once to Mr. Randolph, to ask if he could throw any light on the matter ; and as he was gone, I went to ask Mrs. Marsden. She recognised the packet directly, as one Mr. Randolph had lost, he could not tell how ; and told me, she meant to show them to me as soon as she had recovered them all. She kept the others in my uncle’s old writing-case, that always stands on her table, she said ; but when she attempted to open it, the key was missing from her bunch. Lilla Brittan and the maidservants searched everywhere that could be thought of ; but it was growing late, and I was obliged to come away.’

‘Most extraordinary !’ said Miss Conway, drawing a long breath. ‘You left the other packet there ?’

‘Of course. There was no time to examine it then. But, do you know, Charlotte, Lilla Brittan’s manner was very unlike herself. I could not understand it. Two or three times I found her close to me, as if going to tell me something ; but directly I turned to listen,

she changed colour, and made some excuse for moving away.'

'I *hope*,' said Charlotte, shaking her head, 'that she has not been deceiving us. I have always been rather afraid of Belle Unwin's influence, and I have reason to think they correspond.'

'Indeed! I am sorry to hear it. She could not have a worse adviser. I shall beg her to break it off as soon as she can. Have you ever seen any evidence of doing her harm?'

'I am sorry to say I have. I fear she is not always straightforward and truthful.'

'Oh, poor child, I grieve for her, if it be so. What will she ever be, without openness and truth? I can only hope you may be mistaken; but if you are not, something must be done.'

'I wish I may be mistaken,' said Miss Conway, with a significant sigh, as she left the room.

Her plan, the result of a long, sleepless night, was to repair alone the next morning to Bryanstone Square, relying on her own skill and resources to turn this unexpected occurrence to advantage, and confirm her young ally's fidelity, either by persuasion or terror; but while she was revolving the most plausible form of argument to convince her aunt of the advantages of this arrangement, it was overturned by a note from Mrs. Marsden, begging to see them both as soon as possible. Neither liked to own to the other how anxious, though from widely different motives, each felt at this summons, and the drive was taken almost in silence. They found poor Mrs. Marsden in a state of nervousness, that made her look quite ill.

'What do you think, dear Mary? What do you

think, Charlotte? You know about that key: I wish nobody would ever give me anything to take care of, I am sure. Well, my maid came in to me this morning and told me she had just seen Miss Brittan with my bunch of keys in her hand, slipping on the one we had lost; and sure enough, when I came to look, the key was there; but I cannot get her to own it, or to say a word, and so I thought I would send to you.'

Miss Conway looked anxiously at Lady Delaunay. 'It may be, after all, only a silly practical joke,' she suggested; 'girls are such ridiculous creatures!'

'It may,' said Lady Delaunay; 'but if so, it will be the last of its kind. However, we will hear her in self-defence before we judge. Where is the poor, foolish child?'

The question had to be repeated before Mrs. Marsden heard it, but she at once lowered her own voice, as if in apprehension.

'Why, she is in the next room. To tell you the truth, I left her there; for it made me quite nervous to see her looking so fierce as she has done all the morning; she actually kicked poor pussy for coming in her way, and altogether I did not know what to do. Suppose you just go in quietly, Charlotte, and see what you can make of her.'

Miss Conway needed no second hint; she hurried to find her confederate, and suggest the line of defence she had devised. She was but ill-received.

'This is all your doing, Miss Conway, and I can't bear it, and I won't,' cried Lilla, starting up directly she entered. 'I would not turn tell-tale without letting you know first; but now you are here to answer for yourself, they *must* know it was no fault of mine!'

'Gently; we shall be overheard,' said Miss Conway, placidly; 'there is no occasion to be violent. How was it you did not replace the key sooner?'

'How could I, when she took it into her head to keep the bunch in her pocket till this morning? I did all I could, but Blanchard came prying and peeping, and taxed me with hiding the key; and because I told her to mind her own business, she must needs go and make all this fuss; and as it is your affair, you must get out of it.'

'The first thing to decide is how to get *you* out of it, my dear. Attend to me, and I will bring you through. I will tell you what you must say.'

'I must just say this, first; I cannot tell lies, to please you or anybody.'

'But you can *act* them, Lilla.'

'That is, thanks to you, then; and I know *you* are not over particular; and somebody else knows it too—so there.'

Miss Conway's face grew livid for a moment, and as Lilla saw it approach her own, its transformation made her recoil involuntarily.

'Lilla,' she said, in a low, hissing whisper, 'you have said now what you shall repent as long as you live. You have chosen for yourself, and as I warned you before, you must reap the consequences.'

She opened the door between the two rooms.

'Will you come in here for a moment?'

They both complied, looking very grave, and no wonder; for Mrs. Marsden had the writing-case in her hands, which they had just opened, and, as Miss Conway could have told them beforehand, had found empty.

'I am sorry to say, my dear aunt,' said Charlotte,

with a deeply pained expression of countenance, 'that our young friend is in a mood I cannot understand at all. She will not mind *me*—but I hope *you* may be more successful.'

'Lilla Brittan,' said Lady Delaunay, quietly, 'since you had the key of this case, what have you done with the contents?'

'I never touched them,' said Lilla, doggedly.

'Who else had the key, Lilla?'

'Whoever opened the case. It was not I, that is all I know.'

'That is *not* all you know, Lilla,' said Lady Delaunay, her voice and eye growing sterner. 'You knew it was missing last night; you pretended to look for it; I even remember—I wish I did not!—that you said you had never seen it.'

'Did I?' said Lilla, bursting into tears; 'then I told a lie, but I can't and won't tell another. *She* knows all about it, if she would only speak.'

'*I*, Lilla?' said Miss Conway, in a tone of mild reproach.

'Take care, Miss Brittan,' said Lady Delaunay; 'it is a very bad sign to begin attacking your kindest friends.'

'She is no friend to *me*,' sobbed Lilla, passionately; 'she tries to make me as bad and deceitful as herself, and I hate her for it—that I do!'

'This is growing past bearing,' said Miss Conway. 'I am accustomed to ingratitude, but not to be insulted to my face. Listen to me, Lilla, if you can, calmly, for a moment. Supposing that for a joke you took some papers out, and have put them by, meaning to return them, would it not be better at once, now you

see how it vexes your friends, to say so, and give them up? Are you sure they are not all this time close at hand—in that table-drawer, for instance?"

'You know they are not! You may look if you like.'

This was what Miss Conway expected.

'Just to satisfy yourself, my dear aunt,' she said, turning to Lady Delaunay, who was nearest to the drawer; 'suppose you do.'

'I grieve to doubt any one's word,' said Lady Delaunay; 'where there has been one deviation from truth, there may be another; but I would rather believe Miss Brittan's assertion that there is no occasion for me to look.'

Miss Conway laid her hand on the drawer. 'Shall I open it, Lilla? or is there anything here you would be ashamed for Lady Delaunay to see?'

'No—I mean yes!' cried Lilla, turning suddenly scarlet, and darting forwards to stop her. 'Don't, Miss Conway! please don't!'

But Miss Conway was too quick in her movements; she pulled the drawer open with a smile, and Lady Delaunay could not help seeing the contents. She looked at her niece in consternation, took up one small volume after another, and her face grew darker as she read the names. She signed to Charlotte to close the drawer, and turned on the culprit a look, so much more terrible from its poignant sorrow and disappointment, than the utmost vehemence could have been, that Lilla, after a choked effort at an excuse, with a cry of despair rushed out of the room.

A long and sorrowful consultation was held in her absence. That her deceit was but too surely deep-rooted, it needed no insinuations of Miss Conway

to prove ; it was quite enough that she should have been secretly procuring a mischievous indulgence, in defiance of the known wishes of her best friend ; and the question now became serious—what was to be done next ?

To Lady Delaunay it was a real grief that she could not conceal. That all her kindness, her care, her anxiety, should be so lightly valued and so ill repaid, cut her to the heart. Still, she would not give up the hope of winning her stray sheep back to truth and sincerity.

‘I should not wish her to remain with you,’ she said to Mrs. Marsden. ‘You have done all you could for her, but she must be under stricter care, and with more constant occupation. Let her come up to my house to-morrow morning, and I will talk to her myself, and see what I can do. At present I have not self-command enough, and it will be better, perhaps, that she should have a little time to reflect.’

‘I wonder if Miss Unwin had anything to do with those books,’ said Miss Conway. ‘I am afraid she imbibed the taste from her ; and if so, we may find she has acquired some of her spirit too.’

‘It shows how wrong I was to overlook that girl’s first offence. It was a weakness I am not often guilty of, and never will be again. But in *this* instance, I hope the mischief has not gone too far, and that we may save her yet. God grant we may ! I shall go at once and consult Mr. Powys.’

The breakfast hour in — Street was rather later than usual the next morning, and was only just over, when the Countess and her niece were startled by the most unexpected entry of old Mrs. Marsden, in such a

distracted state, it was some time before they could compose her sufficiently to explain the cause of this unwonted exertion ; but at last she sobbed out, ‘ That poor unhappy young creature !—I only hope we are not to blame—it is no doing of mine, I am sure—but read that, Mary. It was not sealed ; but it is meant for you more than for me.’

Lady Delaunay took the scarcely legible pencilled note that was offered to her, and turned very pale as she read.

‘ I have been very wrong, and I knew I was all the time I was doing it ; but I am not so bad as I seem to be—indeed I am not ! Dear, dear Lady Delaunay, I am so very, very unhappy, I do not know how to bear it ; and I cannot look you in the face, and hear you say to me what you did to Belle Unwin ; so I am going away where you will never hear, or be troubled with me again. I shall never see any one so good as you—never ! but I know you never forgive disobedience and deceit, and as I have told you one lie, you would not believe me if I tried to explain, so it is of no use. There is one person who might speak up for me, but I know she won’t. I am so miserable, so very miserable, that, perhaps, if you saw me you would pity me ; but you never shall, though I shall always be your very, very grateful,

‘ LILLA BRITTAN.’

‘ What does this mean ? where is the child ?’ cried Lady Delaunay.

‘ Where, indeed ? If I only knew, I should be easier ; but she is gone.’

‘ Gone ? When did she go ? Why was I not told ?’

‘She told nobody, my dear Mary; she must have slipped out in the evening, for nobody saw her, and her bed was not slept in, and she took some of her things with her, and left the rest all about the room. I know she had a little money, for I gave her some not long ago, but not enough to last her any time. I am sure if I had thought it would have come to this, I would not have said a word about that stupid key—that I wouldn’t, poor dear little creature! Only think if she should have thrown herself into the river! I have thought of nothing else ever since.’

She sobbed heartily as she spoke, not without evident tokens of resentment against them both, as the indirect cause of this misfortune. To this Lady Delaunay paid no attention; she sat as one stunned, her head resting on her hands. But Miss Conway, to whom the news had brought a relief she durst not show, began eagerly to demonstrate, it could only be the cowardice of guilt that had led to such a step, as nobody could accuse her aunt of undue severity to any one. ‘If she has been for some time in the habit of deceiving us all, no wonder she is frightened at exposure and detection. Depend upon it she will soon be tired of wandering about, and as soon as her money is spent, we shall have her coming back, begging and praying us to forgive her only this once.’

‘And I am sure she should not beg and pray long, as far as I am concerned,’ said Mrs. Marsden. ‘I have no idea of being so hard on such young things; and if she came back to me to-morrow, she should be welcome, and not a word would I have cast up against her. I always thought if that had been done to poor little Ada—’

‘Dear Mrs. Marsden, do consider what you are
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saying !' interrupted Miss Conway, aghast at this startling turn of the conversation ; but in her turn she was checked by the quiet voice of her aunt, who rose with the calm decision of one whose mind was made up.

'Whoever has been in fault, it will be time enough to decide when the evil is remedied. If it is fear of me that has driven this poor girl to this step, it is the more incumbent on me to stop the consequences before it is too late. Let us settle at once what to do, that no time may be wasted. She may be traced by making inquiries at the neighbouring shops and cab-stands, which I shall commission Anderson to do. He has been so long in my confidence, I can trust to his discretion, as well as to his experience. You, my dear cousin, cannot do better than go home, and keep your servants from talking about what has happened. The less noise we make the better.'

'She ought not to be alone,' observed Miss Conway, in a low voice. 'Either you or I ought to be with her, in her excited, nervous state—'

'Well thought of, my love. You had better arrange at once to stay with her as long as she wishes for your society. I will let you know the result of our inquiries as soon as I can.'

This arrangement being agreed to without discussion, as Lady Delaunay's arrangements were always expected to be, Miss Conway returned forthwith to Bryanstone Square to devote herself to her kinswoman, and if possible, get possession of what seemed to have escaped all memories but her own—the packet No. 3.

With what success remains to be seen.

All that day, with untiring perseverance, Lady

Delaunay and her emissaries prosecuted their search, without success. Mr. Powys went to the police station, in hopes that the fugitive might have been seen, as at the hour of her departure such a figure must have been remarked; and Anderson chased cab after cab, on the reports of the general public, but all to no purpose. Lady Delaunay herself drove or walked till dark, scarcely conscious of fatigue—her anxiety increasing with every failure. Neither at the Home, nor at any of the houses of her acquaintance, had Miss Brittan been seen or heard of, and the Countess began to contemplate seriously the possibility of her having gone abroad. The next morning telegraphs passed down to Dover, Folkestone, and Southampton; but no person answering the description had been seen at any of those places. Mrs. Marsden, sanguine about every new measure, desponded proportionately over every failure. Miss Conway, the better to conceal how great she felt the reprieve, a little overstrained her regret and sympathy. Lady Delaunay, who foresaw she would need all her strength and spirits before she had done, worked very hard, and commented very little. The third morning, she made her appearance early, bringing Charlotte her letters, one with a foreign post-mark; and announcing her immediate departure by the next train.

‘Then you have had news?’ cried Mrs. Marsden, for Miss Conway was too much absorbed in her foreign letter, short as it was, to find a word in reply.

‘I have a clue,’ said Lady Delaunay. ‘It occurred to Mr. Powys, that she might have followed Miss Unwin, whose present abode he knew to be in a girls’ school near Shareham; and he has ascertained that a

young lady, more or less answering this poor girl's description (for she was not much heeded), took a second-class ticket to Lilford, the nearest station to Shareham, by the first train the day she was missed. Charlotte !'

Miss Conway looked up from her letter with a palpable start. 'I beg your pardon, my dear; I did not mean to startle you; but were you aware from Mr. Randolph—my love, how ill you look! What is the matter? Any bad news from Bertram? Do not keep me in suspense.'

'None, my dear aunt—none at all—only some of his nonsense,' said Miss Conway, trying to smile; 'he was on the point of leaving Paris when he wrote, and could not say where any letters would find him, and the rest is all *badinage*, that you can see another time. What were you asking me?'

'If Mr. Randolph mentioned to you having seen Miss Unwin in the country. It was from him Mr. Powys learnt her address.'

'Never. Is it possible? Mrs. Marsden, do you hear that? She has actually gone off to the very person her benefactress had publicly expelled. I give her up. I am sure I have thought of nothing but her behaviour, till if I look pale, it is no wonder, for I have a terrible headache; and I really do think she deserves to be left a little while to bear the consequences of her own madness and indiscretion.'

'I might think the same, my love, were it not, that if left to bear them *now*, she may have to bear them for life. No; if I can save her, I will; and I do not think she will stand out against me when she finds I have followed her so far.'

‘And *you—you* are going after her, my dear aunt? Such a piece of condescension on your part, is it necessary? It is kind, generous, like yourself—but is it, may I venture to ask, quite consistent with your dignity?’

‘I think it is time that I was trusted to take care of that, my dear,’ said Lady Delaunay, smiling gravely.

‘But the examination at the Home, Aunt Delaunay—the prizes that were to be given to-morrow, you know? How sadly disappointed all the poor dear girls will be!’

‘I am sorry it should so happen; Mr. Powys has kindly promised to supply my place; and he is decidedly in favour of my going. He is quite right,’ she added, after a short pause. ‘Precious and dear as are the ninety and nine who are safe, we must not weigh them in the balance against the peril of the *one*!’

‘That is right, my dear Mary!’ said Mrs. Marsden, wiping her eyes. ‘God bless you for that merciful word! but if you only had thought the same a few years sooner, you would have had one sheep now in your fold worth all the rest put together; yes, you would! And take my word for it—and not mine only—you will never find a real blessing on anything you do, or have, till you have brought *that* wanderer home. I have long thought it, though I never ventured to say it before; but if it was the last word I ever spoke to you—as it may be for all we know—I must clear my conscience, and tell you, Mary, I don’t believe the Lord cares half as much for your churches and your schools and your charities, and all your good and clever doings, as He would to see you ready to forget and forgive, and taking that poor widowed thing back to your arms and your heart.’

And quite overcome with the unusual effort of so long and energetic a speech, the kind old lady covered her face with her handkerchief, and hurried out of the room.

Lady Delaunay, who had listened in silence, turned and looked at her niece ; and so dark and deeply rooted was the sadness of that look, as to send a thrill of remorse through every nerve of the latter. She flung her arms round the Countess, buried her face in her bosom, and wept in an agony of mind that almost terrified herself. Kindly and soothingly, though her own lip quivered in the effort at firmness, Lady Delaunay kissed her brow, and pressed her to her heart.

‘Be composed, my Charlotte; it is hard to bear, but the strength is given with the cross. *You*, at least, do me justice—you whom I have trusted so long, and who have never deceived me; and while I have you and Bertram left, I have no right to repine.’

‘Oh, forgive me—forgive me!’ murmured Miss Conway, conscience-stricken, and trembling from head to foot; ‘I am not deserving of your love; I have not done what I might—if you only knew—’

‘My child, if we were all judged by our deservings, who could stand? I know your affectionate heart—that is enough for me. You have done what you could, and may heavenly mercy so deal with *you*, as you have dealt with me—and mine!’

She kissed her again, and hastened into her carriage. Miss Conway made an effort to follow and detain her, but her limbs refused to perform their office, and as the door closed on her aunt, she sank unconscious on the floor.

CHAPTER VIII.

The soothing art,
Which only souls in sufferings tried
Bear to their suffering brethren's side.

KEBLE.

'MY dear Adelaide,' said Miss Lyndon, entering the room, where she and the two Emmas were in full conclave, 'do you feel equal to a little exertion this fine breezy day?'

It was what most people would have considered a tolerably stiff gale, but it sounded more cheerful to treat it as a breeze.

Lady Adelaide, who had just been planning a quiet little walk with Emma, could not conscientiously avoid an answer in the affirmative.

'Then I will tell you what *we* are going to do, and the nice plan I have made for *you*. Mrs. Grayling has sent to say she is going to drive over to Shareham, and will take Lucy and me, as she knows we have some necessary shopping to do; and as Walter's hair wants cutting dreadfully (he really looks like a wild man in the woods), I shall get her to let him sit on the box. Meanwhile, I do hope you will try and return a few of the calls you owe to all the neighbours. Nothing could exceed their attention while you were ill, and here are all the names down on paper, that you may not omit

anybody. Now, do promise me you will clear them off as soon as possible ; it is the least you can do, I think—don't you, Emma? She will mind *you*, at any rate.'

'My dear Penelope,' said Adelaide, 'you need appeal to no one. It is enough for me that you wish it ; and as you say, it is the least I can do for all that is done for me.'

'Now, you will make me cross. I don't want to be a tyrant, and drive you into doing what you hate, out of regard for my wishes. I want you to like it yourself, as any reasonable member of society would, and then I need never remind you, and it would be twice as well worth having. Would it not, Emma?'

Emma could not deny the fact.

'To like it?' repeated Lady Adelaide, good-humouredly ; 'well, I suppose that taste is to be acquired by perseverance, and if I must, I must. At any rate, Penelope, I will try.'

'Then no one can expect more. After all, you are too good for some of them, there is no denying that, when one sees you all together : but situated as we are, it really would make a vast difference to our peace and comfort, if you could bring yourself to be one of us—instead of looking for all the world like a prisoner on parole, who may not run away, even if he sees a chance.'

Lady Adelaide laughed and coloured : it was but too faithful a picture of what she had felt, but she hardly liked to have it placed before her. It was wonderful, however, since she had lowered her arms to Penelope's authority, how much more favourably the latter had begun to regard her ; and instead of being jealous of any respect on the part of the neighbours, how incon-

veniently eager she was becoming to build her up a little popularity. She pressed her to think of anything she could bring her from Shareham ; even went so far as to lay a finger on Adelaide's black sleeve, and whisper something about 'a little change ;' but this a quiet shake of the head discouraged, and as Emma was superior to all considerations of Shareham shopping, Miss Lyndon was obliged to set off without any commissions.

True to her promise, Lady Adelaide went a round of visits with Emma, and as she said, tried to like it. If she could not quite succeed, the very effort to do so made her see many things that good sense and feeling could approve, which at other times would have been overlooked in what they were compelled to condemn. How much she was assisted by Emma's pleasant co-operation, she was not quite sure, but it certainly was a very different matter from what it had been : and not to herself only, for though she would have been shocked to be told she had ever failed in politeness, nobody could help perceiving it had assumed a more winning form. Never had her grace and conversational power appeared in Cannymoor to such advantage ; and as each individual became impressed with the belief that it was a flattering exception in her personal favour, her popularity at once shot up to a wonderful height. Indeed, Miss Chatterley, the only one passed over, because nothing would induce Lady Adelaide to set foot in Mr. Spindler's house—heard so much from one and another of the charming things her ladyship had said, looked, and implied on that memorable afternoon, that she was nearly driven mad with irritation and excitement ; and so gusty a reception was prepared for

Abel on his return, as made Miss Lyndon's cheerful breeze seem in comparison a zephyr.

When all was done that duty demanded, Emma would have persuaded her companion to go home and rest; but the rectory gate was open, and Sophy standing at it, and her urgent entreaties for a visit prevailed. The rector met them with cordial welcome at the door, and Colly, with a clean apron tied on in such a hurry that it hung behind instead of before, loomed indistinctly in the background, curtsying blithely, her face all one grin with pleasure to see my lady about again. Here, at any rate, Emma saw that Adelaide was a favourite; and if she would only have acknowledged hunger or thirst, so as to afford an excuse for emptying their larder before her, they would have been quite happy. As it was, Sophy was in a rapture of unexpected bliss in being allowed to draw a stool close to her knee, and sit looking up in her face, showing her the beautiful walnut-wood workbox, with gilt clamps, sent to her all the way from London by Mr. Randolph, with a kind note, telling her it was in return for her industry in working for little Betsy Smith—and having her breath nearly taken away by hearing herself mentioned to Mrs. Henry Lyndon as 'my little confidential friend and ally.'

Emma really enjoyed this visit. Dr. Home was so hearty and kind, Lady Adelaide so agreeable, the little sitting-room, with all its homeliness, so bright and cheerful, that the time slipped away only too fast; and what was only to have been ten minutes, became nearly an hour before they thought about it at all. The ladies were just beginning to talk of going home, when Colly (her apron in the right place this time) appeared to say

as she so often did, that there was a body to speak with the master. Dr. Home went out, and soon returned, looking serious.

‘Your poor pensioner has taken a turn for the worse, Lady Adelaide, and I must go to her directly; but I find she has been expressing extreme desire to see you once more. Are you equal to another visit?’

Lady Adelaide rose instantly, silencing the dissent she read, or thought she read, in Emma’s eyes.

‘I am quite well and strong now; and if I were not, I could not hesitate in such a case. Now, my dear Emma, pray be quiet. It is too absurd to give a whole afternoon to people who do not care to see me, and scruple about half an hour to one who *does*.’

‘I am not aware that I have said anything about it,’ said Emma.

‘No; but you looked, as only nurses can; and I assure you—Dr. Home, do persuade this dear anxious guardian that I am to be trusted to my own care—and yours!’

To the Doctor’s care, at any rate, as nothing else was available, Emma was fain to commit her; for her own duties recalled her to the Manorhouse; but notwithstanding all their protestations, her mind misgave her when they parted, to see the vigorous manner in which the old gentleman, accustomed to use all possible despatch on these occasions, tucked his fair companion’s arm in his, and marched her off, double quick time, in the teeth of the gale. To own the truth, it was not long before the misgiving was shared by the object of it; she was not quite so robust as she had boasted herself; and by the time she reached the cottage, her breath and energy were so well-nigh spent, that Ser-

geant Wade looked quite dismayed as he opened the door.

‘They told me you were getting well,’ he said, resentfully, ‘or I wouldn’t have allowed you to be sent for. You shall not go up till you have rested, I can tell you that. You just go in there.’

And before she could offer an objection, he put her into his room, and into his wooden arm-chair, while he opened a cupboard, took out a bottle and glass, and poured out some port wine.

‘You just drink that, my lady.’

She remonstrated; he stamped on the floor as imperatively as if they had been on drill. ‘Drink it this minute, I say. You needn’t be afraid, for though it has been in a poor man’s cupboard, it comes from a gentleman’s cellar. Mr. Randolph left it with me afore he went—and he is a real gentleman, if ever there was one.’

‘You must drink it, Lady Adelaide,’ put in Dr. Home, quickly; ‘the sergeant is quite right, and you are not strong enough to resist us both, so do not put us to it.’

Sergeant Wade touched his forehead to the rector, with a grim smile, and Lady Adelaide, very much against her will, was compelled to swallow Mr. Randolph’s wine; the two old men standing guard over her the while, to enforce obedience if she resisted. They nodded to each other with much satisfaction as she set down the glass.

‘Thank you, sergeant,’ said the rector. ‘The secular arm is the better guardian of the two. I am not fit to be trusted with anything so delicate; but Lady Adelaide is one of those who will go till she drops, and I should

never have known she was knocked up till it was too late. Now about the poor thing up-stairs. Can we go up?’

The old man looked sternly at Lady Adelaide’s face before answering, as if to make sure she was sufficiently recruited; then deliberately locked up his precious bottle before he went to see. They heard him mount the little steep staircase, and ask in a low voice if they were ready for her ladyship and the parson; and then he came back, pointing to them to ascend.

‘It’s little either of you can do for her now,’ he murmured, in his deep, desponding tones; ‘she only knows one by fits and starts, and then she is off rambling, or stupid like. If you want *Him* to hear you on her account, you must look sharp about your asking.’

‘We hope that He has heard us already,’ said Dr. Home, as, forgetting politeness in anxiety, he passed up the staircase before his companion. ‘It is not our way to put these things off till the last minute.’

Lady Adelaide turned when about to follow, and laid her hand on the soldier’s arm with a gesture of entreaty. He read its meaning, and drew back with a shake of the head.

‘No, no, my lady; it is no work for me. The parson may be a saint, as you are an angel; but I am neither one nor the other; and if there is any mercy coming on *your* account, it would be sure to stop halfway on *mine*.’

‘I obeyed you just now, sergeant; it is your turn to obey me. Come!’

Her face subdued him, as it had done often before, and he followed, just in time to hear the rector, as he

entered the sick chamber, pronounce the blessing, 'Peace be to this house, and to all that are in it.'

It was, indeed, but too evident that there was not much left for human kindness or Church ordinances to do. The lamp was sinking fast in the socket, and it was only at intervals that the sunken eyes lighted up with sufficient intelligence to recognise the faces round her. One of these gleams appeared as Lady Adelaide approached the bed, and the wasted hands made a feeble effort to clasp hers, as she murmured, 'That face was my first comfort—yes, and it will be my last.'

'Not your last,' said Lady Adelaide, earnestly. 'Dr. Home is here—he can give you better still. Can you listen to him?'

She hardly seemed to hear; her eyes were fixed on the countenance bending over her pillow, and there was a grateful love in their gaze that made them beautiful. She tried to speak, but the words came out slowly, and in gasps.

'You saved me—you sheltered me—you clothed me and my little one—I can't reward you, but He will. Thank you for all—and the good gentleman—and his reverence the Doctor—and the sergeant—you have all been too good to such a poor creature.' And with an effort, she turned her head towards the old rector. 'May each one of you have the prayer of your heart given you, in return for all you have done for me. God bless you all four!'

No one answered; the three who heard were too much touched to speak; the tears not only stood in Lady Adelaide's eyes, but glistened in those of the old clergyman, and moistened the withered lids of old Wade, wondering and half angry at his own weakness.

After a few moments' silence, Dr. Home gave notice that he was going to pray. The stupor seemed to be fast creeping again over the senses of the sufferer; but several times her pale lips moved in the effort to follow the words of supplication, and her fingers remained clasped on the hand of Lady Adelaide, kneeling by her bed—as if her very touch gave her comfort and hope. The sergeant stood at first irresolute; but Dr. Home's impressive reading and Lady Adelaide's example, overcame him, he hardly knew how or why, and to the surprise of the old nurse, who looked upon him as nothing short of a heathen, he put one knee to the ground for the first time perhaps during many years—and listened even if he did not join; the little girl, who had run to him on his entrance, crouching in vague terror by his side.

The prayer was just ended—each head was still bowed, and the heavy eyes of the sufferer had closed again, when a sound below as of some vehicle stopping at the gate, and then as if some one was endeavouring to gain admission, made them all rise, and look at each other in wondering conjecture. The sergeant went quietly down to see who was come; Dr. Home made a sign to the nurse, who came to the other side of the bed, and forced some wine between the frothy lips. The woman re-opened her eyes, and a strange expression came over her face. She looked at Lady Adelaide Lyndon, struggling to whisper something she could not utter. The lady bent her ear to her lips, and made out at last the words—'mother—pardon—too late.'

'No, no,' she replied, in a low tone of deep emotion, 'it is never too late while life remains. God permits

us to hope to the last, or our hearts would break. He may yet have reserved this mercy to cheer you on your journey home !'

The sunken eyes dilated as she spoke, and then became fixed and rigid. Lady Adelaide had raised herself from her bending posture, and another form had become visible in the doorway—that of a respectable elderly woman in a close white cap and black bonnet, who came forward in agitation not to be mistaken, ejaculating in broken accents, 'My Nanny !—my poor lost one !'—and folding her arms round her daughter, murmured blessings on herself, and thanks to God for His mercy.

The rector and his companion drew involuntarily back, contemplating the scene with feelings of deep sympathy. They saw the wasted arms twine round the mother's neck—they saw the eyes radiant with the renewed light of satisfied love—they heard her faint, gasping confession and entreaty, cut short by kisses and assurances—and then there came that sudden stillness that is like nothing else in the world, broken by an exceeding bitter cry, as the mother shrieked for help. The nurse, Lady Adelaide, and Dr. Home were round them in a moment, but their misgivings were but too surely realized. That gentle physic, given in time, might have prolonged her days ; but coming when it did, proved too powerful for the sinking frame, and in the very act she had pined for so long, she had expired without a struggle.

The scene that followed, it is not our purpose to describe. It was one of those, which foreknown, would be pronounced impossible for human nature to bear, without shaking reason from its seat. Those who

witnessed were wrung to the heart; but who could measure the anguish of her who endured?

An hour later, Dr. Home, who had been visiting another sick parishioner across the moor, came back to fetch Lady Adelaide, and found her so worn out, he had great doubts as to how she was to walk home. It was no wonder she should be, after the terrible scene she had gone through in attempting to calm the stricken mother—besides soothing the frightened child, and superintending, with womanly reverence, the last offices to the poor body, for which she at least, had done what she could; but not the less was her old friend disposed to scold himself, and her, and everybody else, for the risk she had been allowed to run. There was nothing for it, however, as they agreed, but to set out and do their best, as soon as they had taken leave of the old sergeant. Him they found sitting by his empty grate, in a desolate attitude—his head sunk on his broad chest, and his hands clenched on his knees. He hardly looked up when they spoke, but groaned as if from the very bottom of his heart.

‘Come, sergeant,’ said the rector, kindly, ‘you at least have the comfort of knowing, that when others shut their doors against our poor wandering sister, you set yours open. Her Father, and ours, my friend, will not forget that, nor shall we.’

‘Sir,’ said the old man, slowly raising his head, ‘I believe you mean kindly, and so I thank you. I believe too, that you are in earnest in what you say, and so I ask your pardon if I have not been always as civil as you’d a right to expect. But don’t waste your time upon me; it is of no use. As to *Him* you speak of, thinking aught of my letting that poor body use my

room because my lady wished it, that sounds all very well, but it won't go down. *He* knows me too well, if *you* don't, to take much notice of what I do, or leave undone.'

'Brother!' said the old rector, laying his hand on his shoulder, 'brother!—like me, near the gate of the next world—is *that* your idea of a parent's love? Can you try to persuade even yourself that it *is*, with that poor creature sobbing over her lost one within your own walls—feeling that all she has in the world she would give, and gladly, but to call back the breath into that cold body, which she left—no matter why—to the mercy of the still colder world? Think you that God's love is less than woman's, when you know, as well as I do, *who* it was that said, "Yea, they *may* forget, yet will I not forget thee?" I will not hear Him so wronged. I tell you in His name, that there is a home reserved for you, with His other rebellious children whom His patient mercy has won back from ruin and despair; and He whose pity followed that lost sheep now resting in His bosom, through all her weary wanderings—He it is who will say to you, if you will but turn to Him while it is called to-day, "Inasmuch as thou didst it to one of the least of these, thou didst it unto *Me!*"'

The old soldier's features relaxed. He rose respectfully, and bowed his head, with a heavy sigh, in which there was something more like hope. It was one point gained at least, that he did not sternly reject the offered consolation, and Dr. Home was content to let it work. So with a kind farewell they were just setting out, when to their surprise there rode up to the gate no less a personage than Mr. Ousel. Directly he saw them, he threw himself gracefully from the saddle, and with a

low bow apologized for the liberty he seemed to be taking. It was at Mr. Lyndon's request; who, on reaching home after their ride, had grown anxious on Lady Adelaide's account.

'We have been riding together,' he explained, hastily, seeing her surprise increase rather than diminish; 'perhaps you were not aware that our friend, Mr. Randolph, left his horse at the Squire's disposal; and begged me, as the best service I could do himself and the animal, to persuade him, if possible, to use it; which to-day I was fortunate enough to do; and a charming ride we had; and as I was—ahem!—coming this way, he honoured me with the commission—for which I again entreat her pardon—of hastening Lady Adelaide's return.'

Lady Adelaide was too tired to do more than bow, not at all pleased in her heart with his officiousness; but Dr. Home, whose penetration was sharper than hers, saw the embarrassment veiled by the assumed suavity of the young man's demeanour, and that there was some reason for this strange step.

'If you had brought a side-saddle with you, it would have been rather more to the purpose,' he said, bluntly. 'This lady is quite knocked up, and it is no use talking of hurrying her home, unless you can give her a lift.'

'If I only could!' exclaimed Mr. Ousel, glancing at Lady Adelaide's pale face; 'but cannot it be done, even now? My cloak is here, at her service—too honoured by her use; the horse is as gentle as a lamb. I would lead him myself, to ensure her safety, if she would deign to trust herself——'

'Do, my dear friend, in pity to me,' urged the rector, stopping Lady Adelaide's polite refusal; 'I shall

never forgive myself if you are ill again ; and surely you are too sensible a woman to be cowardly about nothing ?'

She smiled at the imputation on her courage, considering that she had learned to ride, with or without a saddle, from as early a period as her memory would reach ; and, sooner than disoblige him, she yielded reluctantly to the proposal. Joyfully did Mr. Ousel unbuckle his cloak, and spread it over the saddle ; and intense was his emotion of happiness when she laid her hand on his shoulder, and sprang lightly into her seat, allowing him to wrap the thick folds carefully round her, and thanking him with the sweetest smile he had ever seen in his life. As she moved from the gate, Dr. Home beckoned him back, and they exchanged a few words ; and then the rector came up in a hurried manner to wish her good-bye. He had business elsewhere—he would leave Ousel to see her safe home. Before she could utter a word in reply, he turned abruptly away ; and Mr. Ousel taking her bridle, led her on towards the Manorhouse.

Common courtesy and gratitude required her to be gracious to her escort ; and though she would gladly have been silent, she endeavoured to keep up some kind of conversation—rather difficult at first, from his embarrassment and shyness ; but when once her gentle ease of manner had given him confidence, he was only too ready and eager to prolong the interview. He was led into a confession of a great work he had on hand, which had as yet been confided to *one* friend only—a work that would—*must*—immortalize his name, and usher in a new musical era ; and if it might be permitted to bear her name inscribed on the title-page, as a lowly

tribute of the profoundest veneration, the honour would even outshine the fame. She took this dazzling request rather too serenely, but with perfect politeness, and his courage rose with every step. He could not resist the temptation of compelling the horse to walk as slowly as possible, and Lady Adelaide began to express her regret at giving him so much trouble, and adding to his fatigue after his ride.

‘Yes, I *have* had a long ride; no matter, I am not tired. I should not be, were I——Do you know, Lady Adelaide, what I am wishing at this moment?’

She could not imagine, and felt too weary to guess.

‘I wish,’ he went on, in his deepest monotone, ‘that the road before us were but the road of life, and that I might have no higher lot in store than to walk at your bridle-rein till I died.’

As this wish sounded unreasonable, not to say insane, and was certainly not reciprocated, Lady Adelaide would not seem to notice it, and made some civil remark on the work he had yet to finish.

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘there is much for me to do; but it is the lot of those whose organization is more subtle than others, to give way the first. Mozart wrote his own Requiem—the divine Mendelssohn died young. What then? Let us but live in the memory we prize most, and in the tears of those eyes that were our inspiration, and what does it matter?’

What, indeed? But as it would not quite do to say so, Lady Adelaide was just revolving what well-bred disheartening remark would be most appropriate, when he leaned his arm on the horse’s neck, and looked up in her face, very earnestly and gravely.

‘May I speak to you, madam, for a moment?’

‘Certainly, sir,’ said Lady Adelaide, not seeing her way clear to avoid it, especially as he had been speaking already without permission; but not half liking her predicament, nor the expression of his eyes.

‘It may seem inopportune, selfish, inconsiderate; but I have so seldom this happiness, and changes occur so suddenly—you yourself, ere to morrow’s sun, may have seen and suffered change—that the emergency must plead for me. But, first, do you know, Lady Adelaide Lyndon, that you have an enemy?’

Lady Adelaide was silent, perhaps with astonishment.

‘You will not commit yourself—perhaps you are right; but—do not ask me how—we have ways and means of intelligence that the world wots not of, or how should we be what we are? I know who and what he is—what he has dared to aim at, and what means he has dared to use. And I know who it was that baffled him, and that there is another ready to baffle him again. I entreat your patience——’ for she had jerked the bridle in so imperative a manner, that the horse quickened his pace, and the gentleman had rather a scramble to regain his position. ‘I name this but to warn you. Abel Spindler never loses sight of an object, and when you seem to be safest, is his most dangerous time. He has two objects now in view—the Manorhouse and your illustrious self. You may think both equally secure *now*; but should you find that he is too strong and too artful for you, as virtue and excellence have found ere now, remember you have at least *one* devoted friend at hand, who can—who will—help you. Promise me, that in such an extremity you will call upon me.’

He waited for an answer, but, as none seemed forth-

coming—she was, in truth, too vexed and confounded to make any—he resumed, in softer accents, ‘ Enough that you are warned. If my fears are never realized—though, in minds like ours, presentiments are too often prophetic warnings—you have but to forget I ever spoke ; if they *are*, and I can have the happiness of doing you a service, the thought that you will cherish a kind remembrance of me hereafter, will be the sweetest flower on my grave.’

The incongruity of a man with nothing in the world the matter with him talking of his grave in this sentimental way, compared with the reality she had just been witnessing, jarred so gratingly on Lady Adelaide’s taste, that, tired as she was, she felt, if she spoke at all, she must either laugh or cry ; and hardly knew which would be the worst. It was annoyance enough to find that Mr. Spindler’s persecution was known to anybody ; but the vague intimation of further designs affected her but little. She was safe for the present ; no matter how ; and soon she trusted to be beyond his reach. There was no call, therefore, for any vehement gratitude on her part towards her would-be and much too inquisitive champion—whether he lived or died—which at that moment did not seem to her of that importance it was to him. Fearing at last her silence might be misconstrued, she compelled herself to reply in general terms of acknowledgment for good intention ; and trusted to his discernment to take a hint.

He was much disconcerted by this method of proceeding. If she would but have shown some degree of agitation, of curiosity, or even of anger, it would have been a relief from this terrible aristocratic politeness, whose quiet ease only served to make his own em-

barrassment more painfully visible. The moments were slipping away—the opportunity might never return, and he had said nothing yet that he most wished to say. From force of habit, as he walked on, he began to murmur the song he had made his own; and before he recollected himself, had fairly gone through, in his softest cadence, a verse of the far-famed *Adelaide*. He suddenly remembered—looked up, began to stammer an apology—met the grave surprise of her eye, and in the consciousness of having committed himself, waxed desperate and courageous.

‘No, why should I deceive you?—Music is the outpouring of my spirit, and in it I can only be true. So it is—go where I may, try as I will, everywhere and in everything, “*Strahlt dein Antlitz, Adelaide!*” and if I offend you in telling you so—if it is presumption to love unto idolatry perfections that are to be rivalled by none—visit me with your anger, your contempt, if you will, but you cannot eradicate the evil. You may crush my spirit, blight my genius, break my heart, and feel that I deserve it all—but you cannot prevent me, even then, from worshipping and admiring you to the last!’

‘Hush, sir, I beg—I entreat,’ interposed Lady Adelaide. She could not say she did not think him presumptuous, for she did, and that to the highest degree; but she was too sorry for him, and perhaps too thoroughly tired out, to show resentment. Certainly, either Cannymoor itself must be going mad, or had formed a combination to drive her so. Much as she pitied her unfortunate admirer—for theatrical as might be his outbreak of devotion, there was no mistaking

its reality—it was very difficult to answer him seriously and with patience. Nevertheless, she made the attempt, and annihilated him as gently as she could, refraining with more care than she might have used a few months sooner, from any word or gesture that could wound his pride, or give scope to her own. And then came an expressive silence between them, and she thought they should never get home.

Home was reached at last, however. As they came to the front of the house, Mr. Wylde's gig was waiting at the door, and a post-chaise standing a little in front. Arrivals were so rare at the Manorhouse, her first idea was that Henry must be come, and with an exclamation of relief she was hastening on, when Mr. Ousel stopped her short.

‘One word, first, Lady Adelaide! I ought to—I meant—pray wait one minute, only one!’

But she would not be detained; she had no intention of listening; she sprang lightly to the ground before he could prevent her, returned him due thanks for his politeness, and was sure Mr. Lyndon would be happy to see him if he would walk in.

‘Me? no, impossible at this moment; but, oh, Lady Adelaide, if you only knew—’

She knew quite enough for the present, at any rate, to make her break from him in haste; but as she turned at the door to give him a farewell bow, he saw a sudden change pass over her face, that made his heart, less selfish at that moment than she had supposed, beat quick with fear and sympathy. A servant was standing in the hall, as she entered, whose face she had not seen for years, but knew only too well. She sprang forwards with a shriek, calling him by his

name. 'Anderson, Anderson ! what is it ? What has happened ?'

Anderson turned, looked full at her for a moment, and then bowed low—almost to the ground.

'There has been a slight accident, my lady ; and her ladyship has been brought *here*.'

CHAPTER IX.

Mein Alles hängt, mein Leben, mein Geschick,
 Auf meinen Worten, meinen Thränen Kraft—
 Lös't mir das Herz, dass ich das Eure rühre!

SCHILLER.

THE train by which Lady Delaunay went down to Lilford, was delayed, and she did not arrive till an hour later than she had expected. There happened to be an unusual demand for post-horses, and none seemed to be forthcoming; but it was not the first time, by many, that mistress and servant had taken these private journeys of mercy; and while Mr. Anderson was negotiating for a conveyance, Lady Delaunay was prosecuting inquiries among policemen, porters, and attendants, but without success. So many travellers came backwards and forwards, it was hardly possible to distinguish individuals, unless they particularly attracted attention. The trail, in fact, was lost; and she was debating whether a day should not be given up to a systematic search through the town, when Anderson came back at last with a face full of discovery. He had found a return chaise from Shareham, and the loquacious communications of the driver—our old acquaintance Bob of the George—had decided him on securing it at once. Bob had seen a young lady answering the description of Miss Brittan; for why?

did he not find her maundering about the platform, all dazed like, here at Lilford, where he had just set down a wedding party, and didn't he ask her where she wanted to go—and didn't he, Bob, in this very individual chaise, take her his own self to Shareham? To be sure he did; and a pretty, free-spoken young lady she was, and to his thinking, rather too young and too pretty to go larking about the country all by herself, and he made bold to tell her as much; and she cried, and said she had a friend to go to, if she could only find a quiet lodging first to rest herself and think what she had best do; so he told her his mother was as honest a body as ever scrubbed shirt-collar, seeing as how she took in washing by the piece or the dozen; and she had a room to let, and if she pleased, there she might go—and there she went. Oh, he knew nothing more, how should he? He only seed the old woman once a week, when she brought him his clean things for Sunday; for why?—he had his business to mind, and she hers, in course.

To his mother's, therefore, Lady Delaunay resolved to go. It took some time to get to Shareham, and when there, to find the washerwoman after they had found her house. Her evidence was not extensive. Yes, the young lady slept there one night, and a poor helpless young thing she seemed, as far as she could see, and cried if one looked at her; and when she had paid for everything, there was so little left in her purse, that she couldn't afford to send for Bob's chaise, or a fly, or nothing; but was glad to have a lift as far as Uggelstone in Farmer Drake's market cart, that was going that way—to the school they called the College—though what that meant she couldn't exactly say. He took her and her traps, and that was all she knew.

It had now grown so late in the afternoon, that Lady Delaunay thought she had better rest at the inn, and resume her search next day. She was prepared for such an emergency, and was much too independent to feel the absence of her maid. She spent that night at the George, and Bob and his chaise were engaged to take her next day to the College.

Unwilling to cause any excitement by arriving at such an establishment at an unseasonable hour, she did not start early, and the drive was through such very bad roads, that it was more fatiguing than the journey of the day before. It was two o'clock before she drove up to the walled enclosure that fenced the College from the uneducated world. On sending in her card, with a request to speak with the 'Principal,' as the head of the establishment styled herself, she was ushered into a freezing drawing-room, and left to amuse herself with a vase of artificial flowers, several stiff, painfully finished drawings in gaudy frames, four albums laid formally at even distances round the table, and a pair of screens of wonderfully conceived birds and butterflies—an exciting school of High Art that she had ample leisure to appreciate; for the Principal, though held by the farmers' wives and good people of Shareham a model of manners, etiquette, and fashion, did not feel equal to the task of receiving a real live Countess, in her every-day costume; and one's best gown and cap, even at a College, are not things to be put on in a hurry. At last, however, she made her appearance; and her long-drawn curtsey of welcome and apology was well nigh brought to an abrupt conclusion, by the shock of seeing the magnificent visitor she had seen in her mind's eye, transformed into a plain little figure in black, with bright eyes and white hair, and a quiet manner so much

too easy to be grand. Her disappointment was so palpable, Lady Delaunay could not but have observed it, had she not been too anxious for observation; and as soon as possible, she cut short the somewhat confused speech of the Principal, by inquiring for Miss Brittan. At first the lady denied she had been there at all; but on hearing her description, supposed her ladyship must mean a young person who came to see Miss Unwin a day or two ago, giving her name as Jones; and who applied for the situation of teacher, offering her services for her board. Of course, without a recommendation, such a thing could not be thought of, and Miss Unwin could give her none—indeed, pronounced her to be a silly, flighty girl, very badly brought up.

‘Then what became of her, madam?’

‘Really, Lady Delaunay, I cannot say. Had I been aware—but I did not consider myself justified in retaining her—neither had I authority to direct her movements. She left this house, as I supposed, to return to her friends.’

‘May I request the favour of a few minutes’ private conversation with Miss Unwin?’

‘Certainly, Lady Delaunay; whatever your ladyship pleases, I shall be most happy, I am sure. Your ladyship will appreciate’—the Principal had now recovered her presence of mind and her elegance of demeanour—‘the caution I have been compelled to use. The care of young persons, Lady Delaunay, is so responsible, so important a charge—and in this establishment, I can conscientiously assure your ladyship, *every* care, *every* precaution is taken, that parents or guardians could practise, or suggest. If I might be so honoured as to have your ladyship’s recommendation, or if the liberty

were permitted of laying the Prospectus and Rules of the College before you—' Here she pressed a packet of voluminous-looking documents upon Lady Delaunay, and then glided off into a lengthy dissertation on the merits and reminiscences of the institution—to which the Countess listened with the polite resignation she had acquired by long acquaintance with the world, well aware that to interrupt would only be to prolong the matter. In due time, her patience was rewarded, as the Principal, having no more to say, rang the bell, and despatched a peremptory message for Miss Unwin.

Miss Unwin had no elaborate toilette to delay her, and soon appeared glad enough to leave the French grammar she had been hammering into the heads of half-a-dozen young Britons, with about as much success as if they had been of granite. Her face, already flushed with the close school-room, and exertion of tuition, grew scarlet at the sight of Lady Delaunay, who rose as she entered, and greeted her gravely and politely as she would have done a stranger. The Principal introduced her with due form, assured her ladyship that she had every confidence in her abilities and judgment, and then curtsied herself out of the presence.

The momentary confusion visible in the young lady's face passed away when she found herself alone with her former benefactress, and was succeeded by an expression of dogged, almost insolent defiance. She had brooded over her late disgrace, till all grateful memory of past kindness was buried in the sense of wrong; and desperate of ever regaining the Countess's esteem, there was some relief in giving her as much vexation and anxiety as possible. So she met her

inquiries with a mocking smile, and affected surprise that she should trouble herself about any one who had committed 'the unpardonable offence'—as she understood it to be; and as it was evident Miss Brittan thought it, by her not waiting to be turned out. Her ladyship must excuse her—however much to blame, she could not betray a friend in misfortune.

'I trust indeed that you have not the heart,' said Lady Delaunay, earnestly. 'It would be adding injury to injury, if you betray her unsuspecting confidence so far as to hide her from her friends.'

'Pray, madam, what injury have I ever done her? It is no fault of mine that you have made her afraid of you. They are all afraid of you—every one of them. Did you really suppose all the rules and regulations and arrangements you made and enforced, were so very pleasant to all those girls, that they would not have rebelled if they dared? I wish you had been behind scenes now and then, and had seen some of your dear obedient children when they thought your back was turned. You fancy they all adore you, and receive all your dogmas as inspired; but young minds *will* think for themselves, and it is quite time you knew it.'

Lady Delaunay's colour changed slightly, but the glance that rested on the speaker was full of much deeper compassion than when she had seen her wildest paroxysms of repentance. That calm reproachful eye woke up the half-stifled shame within, so fiercely suppressed; in spite of herself, Miss Unwin felt the influence of her presence, and the sinking of her heart warned her she must either strike harder yet—or succumb.

'What injury have I done Miss Brittan, I ask you again, Lady Delaunay? She was your own peculiar

charge—brought up under your own eye, not to have an opinion of her own, or to read a single book that had not passed under the scissors of your censorship. She was to have turned out a pattern and a model to us all. And if she has been, unluckily for the credit of the system, in the habit of deceiving you everyday, reading forbidden works on the sly (the very way to make the worst trash captivating), inventing excuses to throw you off the scent, listening at doors, peeping into letters, and telling or acting untruths—I only repeat her own confession—well! who is to blame? Not I, certainly, who have had no intercourse with her beyond one or two letters—I was not her guardian and friend, seeing her at all times, teaching her how best to take you in, and letting you see nothing but through the mist she raised—not I.'

Lady Delaunay trembled visibly, as if a sudden chill had struck upon both body and mind. 'You assure me on your sacred honour, Isabel Unwin, that you have had nothing to do with all this?'

'On as much of my honour as you think worth appealing to. You took care to let me carry away as little self-respect from your institution as you could; but I have too much left to wish any other to follow my example, and if I had had the opportunity, I never had the inclination.'

'Prove this to me by telling me where I may find this imprudent child.'

'Indeed, you must excuse me. I only know she came in a farmer's cart, and I think she got into it again when she left this house. She was only here a short time, and he was waiting on business. But perhaps,' her eye kindled with malice, and her

colour rose high, 'perhaps if your ladyship did not mind the trouble, there is a lady in the neighbourhood, who, if all we hear be true, is not at all unlikely to know something of such an imprudent runaway.'

'Indeed! who is she, and where does she live?'

'She lives, I believe, not very far off, at Cannymoor Manorhouse. Her name is Lady Adelaide Lyndon.'

Lady Delaunay's eye flashed; her look and gesture were those of a monarch incensed. 'Go!' was all she said, but it was enough for her antagonist, who obeyed precipitately; satisfied to have raised the storm, but not caring to stay and brave it. With a brief adieu, and apology to the Principal, Lady Delaunay then departed also—in quest of Mr. Drake's farm.

Dispirited and fatigued, she was paying little attention to her route, when descending a steep, broken pitch, some of the harness giving way, the horses took fright, and in spite of the driver's exertions, rushed round a sharp corner, and overturned the carriage down a bank, just as Mr. Lyndon and Mr. Ousel rode up to the spot. Finding an elderly lady evidently much hurt, and hardly conscious, the Squire, with his favourite *grand seigneur* air, desired she might be conveyed at once to the Manorhouse, as there was no other gentleman's residence within reach. It was not till the battered carriage had been raised and patched up with the help of some passing labourers, so as to move on at the slow pace rendered necessary by the condition of the inmate, that Mr. Lyndon learned the name of his guest. There was no time for debate; it was speedily settled between the gentlemen, that while the elder rode with the carriage to render any assistance that might

be required, the younger should gallop on to give notice at the Manorhouse, and then to summon Mr. Wylde.

By this means, Emma, the only one at home, was the first to hear *who* was approaching to claim her care and attention. Whatever she felt, she had no time to stay and think about it; at whatever risk of giving offence, she was obliged to take the responsibility of the necessary arrangements; and by sacrificing her own and the baby's rooms, over which she might be considered to have some lawful control, she trusted to do so with as little inconvenience to the others as possible. There was space for them in Adelaide's domain, who was sure to be satisfied, let her do what she might. By dint of much persuading and stimulating of the puzzled servants, everything was prepared by the time Mr. Lyndon arrived with his charge. The wonderful state of that gentleman's mind when he did arrive, and found only his niece, and the excited and contradictory orders he poured forth to every servant and individual within reach, very nearly took away Emma's presence of mind, memory, and breath, just when they were all most needed. Happily, his wife, who had been roused suddenly from her afternoon doze, with a vague impression that something wrong was going on, soon absorbed his attention by a fit of childish terror, that only his presence could soothe; and when once relieved from his commands, warnings, and advice, Mrs. Henry Lyndon speedily recovered the use of her faculties. With Mr. Anderson's assistance, invaluable from his strength, and still more from his coolness, which neither the bruises of his body nor the distress of his mind could disturb—the Countess was conveyed to her

room ; and recovered herself during the operation sufficiently to ask where she was. On receiving Anderson's prompt reply, ' At Cannymoor Manorhouse, my ady,' her eyes closed again, and they heard her murmur, as if unconsciously, ' Fate—fate—or Thy hand ? which—and why ?' and then no more passed till she was left alone with Emma.

It was some time even then before she found strength and resolution to speak ; Emma watched the contracting muscles and quivering lips in no small anxiety, uncertain whether the suffering was from bodily pain, or mental disquietude, and longing for the arrival of Mr. Wylde. At last Lady Delaunay raised her heavy eyelids, and looked wistfully in her young nurse's face.

' Did I understand rightly that I am in Mr. Lyndon's house ?'

' Yes, madam,' said Emma, with a beating heart, wondering what would come next.

' How did I come here ?'

' I believe my uncle saw the accident, and thought your ladyship would be more comfortable than at a farm—so he ventured—'

' You are Mr. Lyndon's niece ?'

' By marriage, madam.'

The Countess paused for breath, but kept her eyes on the fair young face, that burned hotter visibly beneath them.

' I have fallen into gentle and friendly hands,' she resumed, presently, with increased difficulty, yet as if there was something she must say, at whatever cost. ' I may give you all sad trouble, and yet can only thankfully accept your kindness. May I beg one favour ?' Her cheeks grew more ghastly, and her

voice sank to a whisper. 'I am, as you see, much shaken, and at my age, there is no strength to spare. Do not let me be taken by surprise—I shall die if you do.'

'Dear madam, rest perfectly easy; no one will attempt it. No one will even enter your room without your permission.'

'Thank you; that is a distinct promise, and I confide in it, and in *you*.'

She smiled faintly as she said this, and relapsed into the stillness of exhaustion and pain.

Such good speed had Mr. Ousel made, and so expeditious was Mr. Wylde when he heard the quality of his new patient, that he was at the Manorhouse before he would have believed it possible for a commoner, and eased Emma of the burden of responsibility. Lady De-launay had requested to speak with him alone, and it was while Mrs. Henry Lyndon was waiting and listening in the passage, that she caught the sound she had been nervously and yet longingly expecting—Adelaide's half-stifed shriek in the hall, and then her flying step on the stairs. She rushed to meet her half-way, and caught her in her arms, answering, as fast as she could, the questions the daughter's eyes were asking, but which her white lips could not frame.

'Courage, courage!' she whispered, as they moved along the gallery towards the door of the bedroom, and she felt Adelaide's convulsive trembling grow wilder at every step; 'we have every reason to hope and believe that she is not seriously hurt—only requires care—and when once, with God's blessing, we have her well again, it will go very hard with us if we do not get her to hear a little reason afterwards. She is *here*; repeat

that to yourself over and over again; no one can hinder your meeting, if you have only patience and courage; and you have shown so much already, they will not begin to fail you *now*.'

Adelaide seemed neither to hear nor heed.

'Emma, Emma—I must see her, if only for a moment. I *must*.'

'And so you will, I hope, soon—directly she gives permission. I promised that no one should disturb her without it.'

'You promised to keep me out of my mother's room—you, Emma? Do you think you *can*?'

'With your assistance—yes,' said Emma, gently; 'for I have only to remind you that she forbids it, and you are the last who would dare to disobey.'

'*Dare?*' repeated Adelaide, in a hoarse whisper, while her eyes flashed menacingly; 'that is a word of which such as you know nothing. What *you* would not dare to look at, I have *done*; what would horrify you to hear of in fiction, I have lived among, and lived through—and still I live! Do not tell me of what I dare not do; there is no human power or authority that has a shadow of right to stand between me and her—nor *shall*!'

The colour faded in Emma's cheek, and the tears rose to her eyes. She stood silent; too full of pity to be resentful.

'Long, too long,' continued Adelaide, still with the same low, fierce rapidity, 'have whisperers and would-be mediators kept her from me—mocking me with promises and smooth words—always going to explain and persuade, and never, never allowing me one moment to speak for myself. Now, at last, my time

is come—now she is mine, and mine only, and let me see who will venture to bar my way !’

‘Hush !’ said Emma, suddenly ; ‘listen !’

They held their breath for a moment ; and there stole through the closed door a low moan or pain, as if wrung from reluctant lips, that blanched the daughter’s flushed cheek, and dimmed the fire of her eyes. She pressed her hands tightly upon her heart, and her whole frame shook with deep agonizing sobs—the deeper for her efforts to keep them down. Alas ! how often and how long had she prayed to hear that voice, even though it might be in anger—and now that she heard it in the faint moan of suffering, was she going to disobey its first command ? Selfish as she was, to think only of herself and her grief at such a time ! Was this her repentance—this her gratitude ? She turned to Emma, with an imploring gesture of contrition. ‘Forgive me—you are right and I am wrong. I will be patient—I will obey her. God in His mercy only raise her up—and give me strength to wait !’

‘As thy days, so shall thy strength be,’ whispered Emma, passing her arm once more round her : and no more was said by either till Mr. Wylde came out of his patient’s room.

His report was so far satisfactory, that he could assure them there was no fracture or dangerous injury, as far as he could ascertain : but there was quite enough to require care, and above all, quiet and perfect rest. Any excitement or exertion might be highly prejudicial, and her ladyship must see as few persons as possible—no more than was absolutely compatible with attentive nursing. Any one whose appearance was likely to cause emotion, of whatever kind—he looked at nobody par-

ticularly, when saying this, but was pointedly significant and emphatic—*could* not be too careful—at least, for the present. A few days would, he trusted, render such precautions unnecessary. One thing more he would just observe in taking leave—that unless Lady Adelaide Lyndon was a little more prudent than she had evidently been that day—and if she did not at once lie down and rest—he should soon have two patients instead of one.

However sound Lady Adelaide felt this advice to be, it was not so easy to follow it. True, she was calm enough now to feel thankful for the relief he had given to her vague fears, and for the door of hope so unexpectedly opened in the midst of her trial; but *rest*, with heart, brain, and nerves all on the stretch at once, was a blessing just then beyond her reach. Even could she have compelled herself to seek it, it would not have been of much use; for soon after Mr. Wylde's departure, the party came home from Shareham, and she had to hasten to meet and explain to Penelope. It was not the pleasantest task in the world. Miss Lyndon would have been the first to welcome and cherish the unexpected guest, if she had been on the spot to receive her, and take the lead in ordering and arranging; but to come home and find all this to-do and commotion, her whole establishment upside down, as it were, and she treated as nobody in the business—was rather too much for her equanimity.

'Upon my word, what next?' bustling about the while with her parcels and packages; 'it is very odd that some people will never condescend to look at one when they are well and comfortable; and directly anything troublesome happens, here they are on one's

hands, whether one likes it or not! Oh, of course, she is welcome—anybody is welcome whom my father chooses to invite; and of course, your mother—I only say, it *is* very odd, and I suppose there is no treason in that, so you needn't look so disconsolate, my dear: she is here, and here she must stay, and there's an end of it. Only I have no idea of having Emma worked off her feet with nursing everybody, on her first visit to us; so whether her ladyship likes me, or doesn't like me, I shall just take the liberty of seeing how she is, myself.'

Upstairs she flew, and on knocking and sending in her name, was speedily admitted by Lady Delaunay's desire: leaving Adelaide and Walter, who had followed, standing in the passage. Perhaps, of all her humiliations, that of seeing Penelope march past her into that room, was one of the most irritating Lady Adelaide had ever known—the more so from her boy's eager wonder, and impatient questions, which she could not bear to answer. But she had promised to be patient, and she did her best to keep her word; hushing Walter's resentful murmurs at her exclusion, and by encouraging his hopes, in some degree strengthening her own. She was not quite unrewarded; for when Miss Lyndon came out again, and saw them standing there, her mood softened wonderfully. She came up to her sister-in-law, and gave her a hearty kiss.

'I am charmed with her,' she whispered, eagerly; 'I am, indeed; a dear old lady, with the sweetest manners in the world—I like her vastly. She shall have the best we can give her; I will nurse her myself; and she *shall* make it up with you, and that very soon—or my name is not Penelope, and I shall shake her in her bed.'

So comforted and cheered by one and another, Adelaide got through that day.

She hoped, herself, that her mother would ask for her the next morning: and if she did, no medical authority would keep her away—surely, if Lady Delaunay knew she was in the house, she must feel her place was by her bedside, instead of those strangers. To them she was all sweetness and gentleness—would she be hard and severe to her alone? No; she had only to wait cheerfully and hopefully, and the summons must come, and in that faith she struggled through the numerous duties that necessarily fell to her charge, from the demand on the time of Penelope and Emma: amused the baby—soothed Mrs. Lyndon—listened to the Squire—received and answered notes and inquiries, and kept Walter quiet and employed. Still at every spare interval, she lingered by the inexorable door; and her wistful, longing eyes, whenever it was opened, went to the hearts of those who saw. Miss Lyndon thought, as she told her, she was giving a pretty broad hint, when she offered to write to or send for any member of Lady Delaunay's family, whose anxiety she might wish to relieve: but the Countess seemed not to discern her meaning. She thanked her for her politeness, but trusting to be well enough to travel in two or three days, she was unwilling to add to the inconvenience she knew she must be causing. If she would be good enough to forward a few lines she had contrived to write in pencil to her niece, Miss Conway, she should be much obliged; for the rest, unless it was putting too much on her kind friends, she would rather remain in their hands only.

‘Of course,’ said Miss Lyndon, as she reported this

to the committee she had called to sit on the state of affairs—‘I could say no more after that; besides, I have been talking to her servant, Mr. Anderson (a very civil man he is, and waits better than any one I ever saw in my life), and he tells me her ladyship always knows her own wishes best, and expects them to be carried out exactly; but I must say, Miss Conway ought to know the real state of the case, and that Lady Delaunay is not likely to be well enough for a journey quite so soon as she expects. The responsibility will then rest with her, and not with us.’

This was agreed to, with an amendment moved by Emma that instead of Miss Conway being written to, Henry should be commissioned to deliver the note in person. For this Adelaide’s eyes thanked her warmly: the prospect of her cousin’s arrival to stand between her and her mother, had seemed a death-blow to every hope: and neither of them expected Henry would deem it necessary to send her down by the next train.

‘But oh, Emma!’ said Adelaide, when they were alone together soon after, ‘can you not soon speak a word for me? She may not, after all, know that I am in the house, and will not condescend to ask; and if this goes on, I shall break down—I am not so strong as I was, and this hope deferred makes my heart so very, very weary—’

‘Do you think I do not see that?’ interrupted Emma, tenderly. ‘If it only rested with me, or if she were only anybody else—but if nobody else will lead the forlorn hope, I suppose I must.’

It was no light task she had undertaken, and very nervous it made her to think about. Her powers had

been tolerably tried of late, and much as she admired and felt for Lady Delaunay, she could not contemplate without trepidation the possibility of giving her offence—even if she escaped doing her positive injury. Not till the next morning did she find an opportunity ; but the sight of Adelaide's face, after a sleepless night—a return of her old symptoms not to be trifled with—decided her to lose no more time. The Countess appeared freer from pain, and had just been thanking her, after some one of her many kind offices, for her goodness to a helpless and troublesome stranger. Her smile gave Mrs. Henry Lyndon the momentary courage she wanted.

'Ah, madam,' she said, as she bent over the bed to arrange the pillows, and smooth the coverlid, 'the best that a stranger can do at these times, is, after all, of little worth. There is *one* near at hand, whose place I can only imperfectly fill—whose love and tenderness would forestal your wishes—who would be to you now what no other can !'

Lady Delaunay half raised herself in her bed, and looked fixedly in her face.

'It is presumptuous in me—' continued Emma, hurrying on in great confusion. 'I must entreat you to pardon me for interfering ; but if you only could see her anxiety and distress—if you only knew how she watched at your door—'

'At *this* door ?' repeated Lady Delaunay, glancing half fearfully round.

'Yes, just outside, longing to come in—so that we can hardly keep her out. Oh, what may I tell her ?'

Lady Delaunay was silent for some minutes, still earnestly looking in Emma's face.

'Tell her,' she said, at last, in a tone of deep sadness,

that forbade further remonstrance, 'that if my wishes have any influence over her *now*—which hitherto she has given me no reason to believe—she will not attempt to see me without my permission. If she does—if she crosses that threshold, unauthorized by me, it will be at her own peril. She will understand what that means—and why. For you, my dear young friend, to whom I owe so much already, let me add to my burden one obligation more. Reserve your judgment of me and mine till you know *all*. Spare my old shattered frame such a trial as you propose, till it has regained sufficient spring of nerve to go through it. I may seem hard and cruel—I may have been so represented—but at present I am only a weak old woman, in immediate and pressing need of strength; and as such, more an object for your compassion than for your censure.'

She held out her hand to Emma, who felt she could say no more.

But when she repeated this scene to Lady Adelaide, she was quite unprepared for the effect it would produce. Instead of depressing her hopes, it stung them into keener vitality. Her mother had not said she would *not* admit her—only that she must wait for permission, and that permission might come at any hour, whenever she felt strong enough. She thanked Emma with tears, for her intercession, imploring both her and Penelope to watch for the first moment of softened feeling, and seize it before it had time to grow obdurate again; and in an agony of fear lest such a moment should find her out of reach, she took up her station, either in the dressing-room, or, when the intermediate door was obliged to be open, in the passage outside.

Hour after hour, insensible to cold, or fatigue, or hunger, she waited and watched through all that day, till the night was far advanced ; and with the first dawn of light, was there waiting and watching again ; deaf to argument and entreaty, to Mr. Lyndon's remonstrances and Walter's coaxing ; or if she seemed for a few minutes disposed to yield, looking so intensely miserable, no one could persist, though everybody trembled for the consequences. Indeed Mr. Wylde told Emma it would soon be necessary to decide which patient should be sacrificed for the other ; as, whatever might be the risk of exciting Lady Delaunay, the nerves and strength of her daughter would not hold out much longer.

That afternoon the Countess left her bed ; and though suffering acutely from rheumatic pains in almost every joint, persisted in sitting up some time, trying to persuade herself and others that she was rapidly getting well. If courage and energy would have cured her, the doctor would have had little trouble ; but her accident had shaken her delicate frame much more than she was willing to believe ; and when Emma looked at her reclining in the easy-chair, shrunken, wasted, and pale, yet with such firmness of purpose and resolution in the pinched features and steadfast eyes, she hardly knew whether to admire or pity her most ; or whether fear did not predominate over both. How to break the silence, or disturb the deep reverie into which Lady Delaunay had sunk, by renewing the petition that had been so unequivocally rejected before, was equally beyond Mrs. Henry Lyndon's skill and courage ; but while she was busying herself in her usual noiseless way, with the arrangement of the

different waifs and strays that will accumulate, let the nurse be as tidy as she may, she was surprised to see her patient slowly rise, stand a few minutes, as if to make sure of her strength, and then walk steadily across the room. Emma inquired if she wanted anything. No; she only wished to try what she could do; and as she spoke, she opened the door, and stood face to face with her daughter.

The shock of surprise to both was so great, each recoiled a step at the same moment; then Adelaide, as if struck down by the hand of Heaven, sank on her knees before her mother—her face as white as her clasped hands, and her parted lips vainly struggling to give utterance to the supplication that rushed to them. Lady Delaunay stood perfectly still, as pale as her daughter, and as silent; but stern as a statue of Destiny. Emma, as startled as either of them, looked breathlessly on, in expectation of what would follow.

Adelaide's choked voice broke on the silence first. 'My mother—my dear, dear mother—speak to me!—'

It was all she could say. A grey hue crept over the wasted features of the Countess; she sank into the chair, that Emma's quick hand brought forward, and rested her head on her shoulder.

'Speak to me, mother!' said Adelaide, again, as not daring to cross the threshold, she knelt in the doorway, and the tears she could not check, poured hot and fast—'for all my long banishment, all my bitter repentance, all my hopeless longing for a sight of your face, and a touch of your hand—give me but one word! I do not ask for your favour, or your love—those I have lost, and I bow to my sentence; but give me something to make me hope, to help me to be patient, to keep me

from despondency of myself, and rebellion against God ! One word to tell me you have not cast me off utterly—that I may yet one day redeem your trust—that though I never again can be what I was, I may yet look you in the face without the dread and shame that bow me now to the earth before you ! Oh, mother, mother ! . . . if you have a hope of yourself receiving mercy from Heaven, show some to me !’

Her agony of weeping drowned her voice ; she clasped her hands over her face, and sobbed as if her heart was breaking. Emma, whose tears were now running down her cheeks, anxiously watched Lady Delaunay, in hopes of some token of relenting ; but all she could read in those locked, rigid features, were resolution and suffering. Alarmed by the change in her complexion, and the fluttering of her pulse, she tried to warn Adelaide of the risk ; but she might as well have attempted to stay a mountain torrent with a twig, as to arrest the rush of that long-restrained emotion by word or sign.

‘ Mother ! when you saw me last, I was young, headstrong, self-willed ; defying evils I had never known, and unmindful of blessings, valued only when lost. I preferred my judgment to yours—I even believed you to be unjust, cruel in what you had done, and that what my words failed to convince you of, would be proved by my actions. Your look at that dreadful moment fell on me like a curse from Heaven ; and as such has pursued me ever since. Under the scorching sun of India, or tossed in the storms of the sea—in sickness, in disappointment, in privation, and in peril—by the death-bed of my child, by the body of my husband—go where I would, suffer as I might,

through all the long hours of desolation and widowhood, that curse has been with me still—the bitterest drop in every bitter cup—the heaviest load in every heavy burden. Now youth and youth’s bright hopes are gone from me for ever, and all that your anger denounced has come upon me—mother, we meet again. Am I still to be looked upon as I was then? If my fault was heavy, has my punishment been light? Is there no forgiveness, no restoration to be won by repentance, or granted to suffering? Is it a small thing that I have borne so long the doom, usually reserved for those who disgrace their birth—that strangers may point at me as the alien of my race—and every lip taunt me unchecked, that the hired servants of my mother’s house may look in her face when they will, but that it is forbidden to me? But let that pass; if it is your pleasure that it should be so, I bow to it; only give me a hope, as faint, as distant as you will—set me some task, however hard, toilsome, humiliating, as a condition of forgiveness—and I will perform it, if I live; it will be something to live for, even if I never succeed. Oh, mother! so small a grace—implored upon my knees—can it be that I must implore in vain?’

Emma felt the hand she held grasp her convulsively; a powerful struggle was visible in the mother’s features, and the cold drops stood on her brow and lips. ‘You are killing me among you,’ she murmured slowly. ‘I have not strength for this—I must lie down.’

Mrs. Henry Lyndon saw indeed that she was nearly exhausted, and ought to be left quiet; but what could she do? She had never in her life been in a more distressing perplexity—feeling for both, longing to bring them together, and yet convinced that the pro-

language of this trying scene would do more harm than good. Resolved, however, to make one effort in poor Adelaide's behalf, she ventured to return the pressure of the Countess's hand with both her own.

'Oh, dear madam! speak to her, if it is only one word!'

To her surprise, Lady Delaunay, whose head had sunk on her bosom, looked up; then, with an effort of which she had seemed incapable, slowly raised herself from her chair, and supporting herself against it, stood with her face turned towards the suppliant. Even at that moment, there was something with which Mrs. Henry Lyndon could not help being struck in the position of these two; the mother's figure, so frail and small in its physical power, towering above the noble person and intellectual beauty of the daughter, who seemed bowed to the earth beneath her glance. Lady Delaunay did not keep her long in suspense, though the low deliberate tone of her voice showed with what difficulty the exertion was made.

'Adelaide, why was not this done sooner? Once, a word of repentance would have opened my arms to you in a moment; *now*, I must look to actions before I can accept it as sincere. You ask for a test,—I have but one—obedience. I wish that door to be shut.'

She turned with a sign to Emma, half-imperative, half-entreating; and moving slowly and painfully towards the bed, stretched herself upon it motionless, with her face towards the wall.

There was but one thing to be done, though it went to Emma's heart. She made an attempt to close the door; Adelaide looked up in her face with a mute

expression of despair, that melted her very soul within her. It did seem hard she should be obliged to perform so cruel a task ; she felt how she should have hated anybody who did it to *her* ; but it must be done—only how was she to shut the door on those thin white fingers, that clung to the post as if it was their last hope ?

‘ Dear Lady Adelaide, my own dear friend,’ she whispered, as tenderly and lovingly as she felt towards her, ‘ submit once more !—obey her command !—it will do more for you than any entreaties. Hope on, trust, and persevere ; and if you are as generous and high-minded as I believe you to be, forgive me for what I *must* do—I *must* shut you out.’

‘ Oh, Emma !—to see her, to hear her—and to have won no more than this ! What can I—what shall I do more than I have done ?’

‘ Obey ; that is all you *can* do now. Her health—her very life may depend upon her being left quiet. I have promised to guard the privacy of her room ; help me to keep my promise—and pardon it.’

She gently unclasped Adelaide’s fingers. Adelaide offered no resistance ; her hand dropped powerless on her knee, and as the door was slowly closed, she sank on the ground—heart, strength, and spirits alike crushed and broken down.

There Penelope found her, and not a little frightened she was at her state. She raised her almost by force, and half-leading, half-dragging her, contrived to get her into her own room, and lay her on her bed ; then gave her a brisk scolding by way of restorative ; and ended by throwing her arms round her neck, and crying over her more heartily than she had done since the news of

Walter's death. Perhaps a more soothing treatment might have been suggested ; but it seemed to answer the purpose ; for Adelaide, too worn-out herself to weep any more, felt those tears deeply, and resting her aching head on her sister-in-law's shoulder, loved her, as she had once believed to be impossible.

CHAPTER X.

Portia.—Why, know'st thou any harm's intended towards him?

Soothsayer.—None that I know will be, much that I fear may chance.

SHAKESPEARE.

MISS CONWAY was out when Henry Lyndon called in Bryanstone Square; but on sending in his card to Mrs. Marsden, with a request to speak with her for a few moments on business, he was speedily admitted; and found the old lady, with her trumpet in one hand, and her spectacles in the other, anxiously studying the said card, in such a flurry of eagerness to know his errand, as almost deprived her of the faculty of understanding it.

'Come close to me, or I can't hear you. There, sit down there, Mr. Henry Lyndon. Now, are you a relation of that poor young thing's husband that was?'

'Captain Lyndon was my cousin, ma'am.'

'How is she, poor creature?'

'She is just recovered from an attack of illness, brought on by nervous anxiety and agitation.'

'Bless me, think of that. Young people can't be so strong in these days as they used to be: at her age, I never knew what being nervous meant, and it doesn't make me ill, even now. I hope she has all she wants?'

Henry slightly shrugged his shoulders, with a smile.

‘Because,’ lowering her voice instinctively, ‘if not, I don’t mind telling you, as one of her husband’s family, I have some money to spare at my banker’s; and if I knew how much she wanted, I could draw her a cheque in a minute.’

He thanked her cordially in Lady Adelaide’s name, but suggested, that from what she knew of that lady’s character, it would not surprise her to find her shrink from accepting assistance from her relations, while she was refused their regard and good-will.

‘Dear me, and that is true; though she has always had mine, I am sure, and you may tell her so; but what can anybody do so long as she is on bad terms with her mother? Why doesn’t she beg her pardon at once, and have done with it?’

‘Because, Mrs. Marsden, she has not been allowed the opportunity.’

‘Can’t she write to her?’

‘Lady Delaunay refused to receive her letters.’

‘Well, but there is her brother—there is Charlotte Conway—where there is a will, there is a way. Don’t tell me if a young woman feels she has done wrong, that she can find no means of saying so; for I don’t believe it!’

‘Mrs. Marsden, believe *this*, for I can prove it to you; Lady Adelaide *has* tried every means in her power, and to no purpose.’

‘I never knew it, then, nor her mother either, I am sure of that.’

‘No—you were not meant to know. But others *did*.’

‘Bless me, Mr. Henry Lyndon, you quite frighten me.’

‘I hope not; I only wish you to know the truth. Lady Delaunay must sooner or later, and I trust it will be very soon. Do you know where she is at this moment?’

‘In the country: we had a few lines from a place called Shareham, just to say she was there. Why? what has happened?’

Henry explained succinctly, producing the note. The old lady was too shocked and startled at first, to take any but an alarming view of the matter; and was with difficulty brought to understand that Lady Delaunay was quite capable of giving her own orders, and had expressly declined the proposal of sending for a London surgeon, or for her carriage and servants. In the fulness of her heart, she poured out to her visitor all the circumstances of poor dear Mary’s sudden journey; letting in a flood of light on his understanding which he did not the least expect. It was not till her spirits were a little relieved by this safety-valve, that she was able to consider calmly the new position of affairs; but suddenly it seemed to dawn upon her.

‘Why, then, Mr. Henry Lyndon, if what you say is true, supposing poor dear Mary not to be much hurt, it seems, after all, that it was the luckiest thing in the world that could have happened. Don’t you see, they are together now, and what is to hinder them from having it all out, and talking it quietly over, and making it up comfortably? Goodness me, how glad I shall be! Why, Mary will be bringing her back with her—see if she doesn’t!’

‘I think with you, madam, there is good reason for

hope, provided they are left to themselves. Anybody interfering between them would only leave matters rather worse than they were before.'

'Ay, meddlers always make mischief. Then you don't seem to think Charlotte Conway would be of much use down there?'

'Decidedly the reverse, for more reasons than one.'

'I am glad I asked you. I'll take care she doesn't go. You are not in a hurry, are you?'

'Not if I can be of service by remaining.'

'Then, don't speak too fast, or I shan't understand; but just tell me everything you know about the child Ada; I have heard nothing of her for years, except what I didn't want to hear.'

Thus encouraged, and reading in her looks her honesty of purpose, Henry was only too glad to speak; and with all the warmth of friendship and true feeling, described Lady Adelaide—her past struggles with adversity—her present desolation—her long agony of repentance—her many bitter disappointments—her recent illness brought on by mental suffering—till his own eyes grew moist at the picture he drew, and Mrs. Marsden was wiping hers fast.

'Surely, surely,' she repeated, 'her brother doesn't know all this, nor Charlotte either; or they would have done something long ago.'

'Mrs. Marsden, her brother *does* know it, and was so much touched, that I am quite sure he would be glad to see a complete reconciliation; but there is one member of your family who will never suffer it to take place, if she can prevent it.'

'You don't mean that? Really?'

'I am certain of it.'

She looked at him significantly ; he held up his finger with a shake of the head, for he heard a step on the stairs, and the next moment the door opened, and Miss Conway came in.

If she was startled at his unexpected appearance, which all her presence of mind could not conceal, he was scarcely less so by the change in hers. She looked many years older than when he saw her last ; her forehead bore the lines of continual contraction, her cheeks had grown thinner, her eyes were dimmed and hollow, though they lighted up with all their keenest intelligence directly they fell on the face of the lawyer. He rose as she came in, with a bow, and presented her aunt's note ; and while she opened it, Mrs. Marsden saved him the trouble of repeating his explanations, by repeating them herself, so that in a few minutes she understood the whole. In every way it was a severe blow, and her agitation was considerable, and though mixed up in motive, evidently sincere.

There is a great stress laid sometimes on poetical justice, as if it were the special privilege of that tribunal to keep a store of pet punishments at hand, for the demolition of the iniquitous that come under their jurisdiction. We are not going to quarrel with so venerable a court ; the rather that there are few courts existing whose decrees have been equally refreshing to the public generally. What a blessing it is when Hatteraick breaks Glossin's neck—when Bertram Risingham rids us of Oswald—when Hawkeye, who ought to be ashamed of himself for not doing it sooner, sends a rifle bullet into Magua at last ! Who grudges Mr. Pecksniff old Martin's cudgel—or the express train to Mr. Carker—or the falling pillar to Arbaces the

Egyptian—or feels the slightest compunction about the thumbscrews, and other *peines fortes et dures*, so delicately hinted at to Iago? Even that most trying catastrophe of the well-known secret passage with the spring lock, which you cannot possibly find, or if you do find, cannot possibly open, and are consequently and most deservedly eaten up alive by the rats—is not without its charm, in disposing of a baneful evil genius, on whom ordinary castigation would be thrown away. And yet it may be questioned—according to the modern fashion of questioning the value of every ancient institution—whether this machinery of vengeance be not, after all, in many cases, a superfluous expenditure of power. There is one species of punishment, which selfish schemers, such as was Miss Conway, carry constantly about with them; not exactly conscience—for conscience can be hardened; nor remorse—for remorse only gnaws at intervals; nor is it the dread of a future retribution—for that a practical unbelief can do wonders in explaining away—but a wretchedness which draws poignancy from all and each of these; a sorrow that worketh death, by urging the spirit from bad to worse in the vain hope of escaping it; blinding the understanding, and bewildering the judgment, till they are driven to measures from which they would once have recoiled—even as any one individual of a panic-stricken crowd would recoil in cold blood from the leap, or the rush, or the struggle that adds its unit to the great sum of murder and agony.

The anguish of Adelaide Lyndon, weeping at her mother's door, was not in reality so terrible as that which hourly consumed her rival, from whom that mother had parted with a blessing; for prayer and

humility are mighty comforters—but a prayerless, unrepentant suffering who can bear? It was impossible for any heart, not utterly dead to all feeling, to be insensible to such constant kindness as Lady Delaunay showed her niece; and it was equally impossible for her to contemplate without terror, what would be the result of her discovering how that kindness had been repaid. This last fear it was, that whenever her better angel whispered to her aching soul of a blessed relief in restitution and amendment, couched like a lion in the path, and forced her to believe there was no retreat possible; that at all hazards she *must* go on, and purchase indemnity by success. Therefore, notwithstanding the pang of remorse that had overwhelmed her when she took leave of her aunt—notwithstanding the sickening dread with which she waited, hour by hour, for news from abroad—she took no steps to undo what she had done, nor relaxed in any degree from her usual habits of watchfulness and diplomacy. These had in the present instance been rather at fault; but how could she foresee, that during the short interval so necessary to refresh her wearied brain with a little exercise, her stronghold would be invaded in her absence by the very antagonist whose acuteness she dreaded most?

She treated him, however, with marked civility; expressed her strong sense of gratitude to his family for the hospitable kindness her aunt described herself as receiving; and was adding something about soon testifying it in person, when Mrs. Marsden, who was listening with her trumpet raised, broke in with unusual vehemence—

‘You are not thinking of leaving me, Charlotte?’

‘Dearest Mrs. Marsden, not from choice; nothing but a sense of duty—’

‘You wouldn’t be so unkind and cruel, would you? I can’t be left alone, and I won’t; so there is an end of it. Your aunt does not want you, or she would say so; and *I* do. I wonder you could think of such a thing! but of course, a poor old woman like me must be such dull company, you are only too glad of an excuse—’

Miss Conway interrupted her with an embrace, and fervent protestations of affection.

‘Well, well, that’s all very fine, but will you promise not to go?’

‘Not without your full consent. Pray, pray compose yourself. You see how it is, Mr. Lyndon,’ she continued, as she followed Henry to the door; ‘between two such dear friends, both claiming my care at once, my poor heart is well-nigh torn to pieces.’

‘It is indeed a gratifying thing to be so valuable,’ said Henry.

A hasty report was all he had leisure to despatch to Cannymoor; the precious time he had lost all his diligence could not recover, and as he toiled through the mass of accumulated work, he felt strongly inclined to repeat ‘a plague on both your houses!’ to say nothing of his own. He hoped that he had seen and heard the last of them for that day at least, but he was doomed to be disappointed. Just as he was leaving his chambers, after a hard day’s work, he received a note from Mr. Powys, begging to see him on urgent business as soon as possible. The messenger had a cab with him, in hopes of conveying him back then and there; and Mr. Powys was on the look-out, and opened the door of his house to him in person. He thanked him warmly for

his prompt compliance with his summons, for which he would apologize, had not their mutual friend Mr. Randolph referred them to each other in case of anything transpiring in which they were all interested. As every moment was precious, he would come to the point at once, and installing Henry in his own arm-chair, he proceeded to put him in possession of certain facts just come to his knowledge.

It appeared that for some time past, Mrs. Marsden's confidential maid and housekeeper, Blanchard, had been under the impression that there was something underhand going on in her mistress's house; a system of spying and listening, which, though she could not actually detect, became more and more perceptible. Miss Brittan seemed to be the principal agent; but Blanchard, a shrewd, observant woman, felt pretty certain that she was an agent only, taking her instructions from somebody else. The many whisperings, closetings, and other mysteries that took place whenever Miss Conway came, were by no means so unnoticed as the ladies supposed. The servants had been in the habit of watching them a long time, and the secret of the French novels was none to them. The circumstance of the missing key had confirmed Blanchard's worst suspicions, and on the evening before Lilla Brittan's flight, she had tried to persuade her to make a full avowal, and trust to the kindness of Mrs. Marsden, but in vain.

Enough, however, transpired to satisfy the housekeeper that the young lady was not the only guilty person, nor, indeed, the guiltiest; though, having no proof either way, she could say nothing. When Miss Conway came to stay in the house with her maid, she watched them both, and every day with increased dis-

satisfaction: it was bad enough to have Miss Brittan peeping into every letter, and opening every drawer, and listening at every door; but when it came to that pert Mrs. Forrest doing the same, it was past bearing, and she told her so. Forrest, secure in her mistress's support, answered sharply, and a private feud had been some days in progress, which at last had come to a public quarrel, and an appeal from Blanchard to Mrs. Marsden 'which of them must go?' Mrs. Marsden, to whom the idea of losing her housekeeper was only a shade removed from utter ruin, called in Miss Conway, and implored for Forrest's dismissal. Forrest, who had boasted loudly that *her* mistress would take her part, was beyond measure exasperated to find she was not disposed to offend Mrs. Marsden for her sake, and that instead of bringing her off with flying colours, she wanted her to strike and surrender. Apologize and make friends with Blanchard, indeed! she should do no such thing, not she; she had only obeyed orders, and tried to give satisfaction, and if apologies were to be made, let them who gave the orders take the shame. It was on no errand of her own she was looking into Mrs. Marsden's bureau, which Blanchard made such a hubbub about, and what was more——. And so she went on, working herself up to a pitch of rage, in which she grew so insolent to her mistress, the latter had no choice but to express the greatest indignation, and discharge her on the spot. Mindful of her own risk, however (though this fact was not told Henry, as it was only known to themselves), Miss Conway made a very handsome addition to her wages, sufficient, she hoped, to bring her to reason, and remind her where her interest lay involved. It was,

however, contemptuously returned; the woman's rage made her indifferent to everything but the desire for revenge, and she let fall some expressions to Blanchard (against whom her animosity had now proportionately cooled), which alarmed the latter not a little, and made her determine to find out their meaning. She persuaded Forrest to remain quietly in the house, and when Miss Conway, who supposed her gone, was out in the carriage, laid the matter once more before Mrs. Marsden.

'So far,' said Mr. Powys, who had given the above in a much more cursory manner than we have done, 'the case is nothing more than a scene of domestic annoyance and petty passions, such as are best confined to the sphere in which they occur; the impatience I felt when it was being told me I dare say you are feeling now. But I soon found there was some reason for the dismay that had made the good old lady send off for me in such a hurry, and receive me in such mysterious secrecy. It seems that Mrs. Forrest had said plainly that there was mischief brewing that nobody had any idea of, and that if in a day or two we heard some shocking news, it might surprise *us*, but would not surprise *her*. I expect this escaped her in her anger, rather prematurely; for no persuasion could make her explain; she would only repeat that mischief *was* brewing, and that it would soon come out: the rest of her eloquence being expended in denouncing her mistress, who, she said, had made a tool of her for her own mean ends, and then, when things went wrong, turned round upon her like this. Fearing at last that Miss Conway would return and interrupt the examination, I invited the woman, as she had no place to go to, to

come home with me, and stay with my housekeeper for the present, and then sent off that unceremonious summons to you. It occurred to me that you would know better how to extract evidence than I did. I may be mistaken in the alarm I feel on the subject, but alarmed I am, and till I know the truth I cannot rest.'

'Can I see the woman?' asked Henry, without expressing any opinion one way or the other.

'Certainly, in a minute,' and in answer to his summons a smart, sharp-looking little person speedily appeared, looking, however, rather frightened at the sight of a stranger.

'Come in, Mrs. Forrest,' said Mr. Powys; 'you have no reason to be nervous, if you will only be frank and open. This gentleman is a lawyer, and well known to Lord Delaunay, and if there really is what you call "mischief brewing," in which the family is concerned, he may put us in the way of stopping or remedying it, if he only knows the particulars in time. So now let me persuade you to keep us no longer in suspense, but make us all your friends by a plain statement of the truth.'

She hesitated, and murmured something of being afraid.

'Perhaps,' said Henry, smiling, 'you are rather afraid of saying how you came by the information—is that it?'

'Well, sir, you see—'

'I do see. But would it not be pleasanter for you to tell us two here in confidence, than to be put upon your oath in a court of justice, and cross-examined as a witness before a great many people—as you may be, for all I know?'

‘Oh, sir, sir, I hope not! Indeed, I had nothing to do with it!’

‘But you know all about it, whatever it may be; and if it prove to be something serious, you will certainly be called upon to say what you know; and if you do not tell, you will be sent to prison.’

She began to sob, and petition to be excused. If she had only known, she would have said nothing; and all she was afraid of now was of doing more harm by speaking than by holding her tongue.

‘Leave that for us to decide for you, and just speak out honestly, like an upright, sensible woman. I promise you shall be protected from the consequences; and if you really save Lord Delaunay’s family from trouble by so doing, you may be sure of both thanks and reward.’

This was not without visible effect, but still she went on crying, without coming to the point, and Mr. Powys was on the very brink of an explosion of anxiety and impatience. Henry waited a little while, and then turned to him, saying very coolly, ‘It is of no use wasting our time here, sir; it is evident there is nothing really of consequence, and I am only sorry so much should have been made of a trifle.’

Before Mr. Powys could answer, Mrs. Forrest had started up in great indignation. ‘A trifle do you call it, sir? You will soon see if it is or not!’

‘There, there, my good woman, we do not want you to excite yourself. You were angry, and did not quite know what you were talking about, I dare say.’

‘I did know, sir! and I know now! and since you please to think it such a trifle, I just ask you, sir, what do you suppose a gentleman would be likely to do, if he

heard that another gentleman was coming to him with a letter of introduction from his own mother—she, poor dear lady, not knowing all the while that he was a mean, artful sort of a man, who had done the family all the mischief he could, and was trying to do some more? I ask you now, sir, what would such a gentleman be likely to do?’

‘*That,*’ said Henry, brushing his coat-sleeve with his cuff, as if the question was one of the most perfect indifference to him, ‘would depend very much on the manner in which the information was given, and the person who gave it.’

‘Suppose that person was his own intimate friend and cousin, that his own sister was the party concerned, and that it was told him in such a way that he couldn’t help believing it?’

‘Why, in that case, it would probably be an awkward business.’

‘Not a mere trifle, sir, you think?’

‘Certainly not.’

‘Then don’t ask me how I know it, for I’m not going to tell you; but that is just how the matter stands between my lord, and Mr. Randolph, and Miss Conway; and now you may judge for yourselves if there’s likely to be mischief or not. I should say there was; but then I’m not a gentleman, nor a nobleman either, so I may be wrong.’

‘On the contrary, Mrs. Forrest,’ said Henry, without noticing the consternation and horror painted on Mr. Powys’s face, ‘it is you who are right, and I who am wrong. Pray sit down a moment.’ And placing a chair for her with much politeness, he sat down by her side. ‘I was wrong, and I beg your pardon. But as

we must be careful what we are about, for your sake, as well as our own, perhaps you will not object to answering a few questions about your sudden dismissal from Miss Conway's service. So confidential an attendant would not have been parted with unless for some sufficient reason. Was it because you opened Mrs. Marsden's bureau without orders?' .

'No indeed, sir! It was by her orders I did it. She wanted me to find a bundle of old papers that were kept somewhere in the house, and I was to look everywhere till I found it.'

'Did you find them after all?'

'No, sir; and it's not the first piece of work I have had all along of that same bundle, for she thought once it was dropped in my lady's carriage, and told me if I could find and bring it to her—quietly, you know—she would give me a new gown. But I never could hear anything of it, and no wonder, for it was all the while in my lady's own room.'

'Then I am afraid you lost your gown, as well as your time and trouble. That was a pity.'

'No, sir; I had my gown—but that was for something else.'

'You were very useful to her, I have no doubt. Were you often in the habit of doing these little private errands?'

'Oh yes, sir; scores of times. I hope she will find some one as able and willing to serve her as I have been, I'm sure!'

'I should think that may be difficult. Do you know what was to have been done with that parcel, if you found it?'

'I can guess, sir; that it would go where two others

went, that she brought home in her muff, and burnt in her grate by handfuls at a time, and nobody knew of it but me.'

'She put great trust in your cleverness and discretion, it seems?'

'Well, sir, I think she did. She used to make me watch every letter that came into the house; and she had a way of opening and fastening them up again, so that nobody could find it out.'

'Very ingenious; did it take you long to learn?'

'Oh dear no, sir: I could do it quite as well as herself at last.'

'She made you do it for her, then?'

'No, sir; but I have seen her do it, often and often.'

'And that put it into your head to do the same to her own letters?'

'Oh, sir—what makes you fancy such a thing?'

'Never mind: between friends, now—am I not pretty near the mark?'

'Well, really, sir, when she did it herself to my lady's, and sometimes my lord's too, I did think there could not be much harm—'

'In paying the same compliment to hers. Very natural that you should. And that is how you came to know what she had written to Lord Delaunay about Mr. Randolph?'

She hung her head, as she murmured a reluctant 'Yes, sir.'

Mr. Powys got up, walked up and down the room, and sat down again: Henry went on with unmoved composure.

'Now, Mrs. Forrest, having ascertained that point, I must say a few words to you, very seriously. If this

were to be known, your character is gone—hopelessly gone—for who would take a person into their service, however quick and clever, on whose integrity they could not depend? I do not wonder you were unwilling to explain this little circumstance, but it was necessary we should know on what kind of evidence we are going to act. On your discretion *now* will depend your future fate. Should Miss Conway learn how you have betrayed her, the fact of her having taught you the way to do it, might not deter her from exposing *you* to her friends; and I leave you to judge whether you would gain much by recrimination. It would be of little consequence to a lady asking your character, whether your late mistress was an honourable woman or not: but it would go very hard with *you* were she to be told you could not be trusted with a sealed letter.'

'Oh sir, sir—what am I to do? You promised me—'

'I promised you protection and reward: I do still, if you implicitly follow the directions I shall give you. First, to tell nobody a word of what has passed till you have leave; secondly, neither to see nor communicate with Miss Conway in *any* way for the same period; and thirdly, to take into your serious and thoughtful consideration, whether sticking to the good old rule of honesty and straightforwardness would not be safer and better in the end.'

The woman cried bitterly, but more, as it seemed, from fright than penitence. Between her sobs, he made out that there was more he ought to know, as he knew so much, and her chief dread seemed now of not being sufficiently circumstantial.

'It all came on this way, sir, I do assure you: Mr.

at whatever sacrifice (in my case it is no small one just now), and if you cannot go, I must.'

For Mr. Powys to start that night was impossible, as his curate was away, and he had services and appointments to attend to that could not be left undone. It was decided after a little discussion that Henry should undertake the journey, and the clergyman remain to watch, and be ready to communicate with Lady Delaunay, when necessary. He insisted on the lawyer's waiting to share his frugal dinner, and over it they settled their plan of proceedings.

'If it turn out,' Henry Lyndon said, 'that our "curious impertinent" is correct, and that Lord Delaunay has been persuaded that Randolph has acted or is acting ill by his sister—Miss Conway, clever as she is, has made a false move. In simple justice, he cannot refuse to appeal to Lady Adelaide's testimony, and if he once sees her again, I defy him not to take her part.'

It was a busy night for the active lawyer before starting for the steamer. Among other letters, he wrote a few hurried lines to his uncle, simply announcing his being obliged to go abroad on business, and advising him, for divers reasons, to come up to town immediately, and settle his own affairs without loss of time. He would write to his wife from the Continent, not having then a minute to spare.

The letter reached Cannymoor on the afternoon of the interview described in the last chapter, in company with one from Miss Conway to her aunt. She had already written to deplore her accident, and her own inability, owing to Mrs. Marsden's nervous excitement, to come down and nurse her herself; but this was a

longer and more carefully worded epistle, in which, after many expressions of fondness and sympathy, she went on as follows :—

‘My heart is with you—bleeding for you ; knowing what your noble nature will suffer, from appeals and supplications, to which your sense of justice and of your own dignity will make you unwilling to yield, and your generosity no less so to reject. One thing I must entreat ; should you hear *me*, as you *may*, somewhat bitterly spoken against, pray do not take any notice of it. I cannot but feel, that the *more than maternal goodness* I have received from you, must naturally give rise to some soreness in the mind of *one*, who has learned by this time, through hard experience, *what* she so hastily threw away. I am the more anxious to press this point, that I believe, such are her difficulties, pecuniary and otherwise, that she will be ready to stoop to any concessions, or sacrifices, that would seem to open a door of escape from her present position. Of the family she lives with, not a little against her will, I have seen a specimen in the gentleman who brought me your note—a forward, under-bred personage enough. With all my grief for you, I could not help thinking how you would smile—keen observer of human nature as you are—to see how the exultation at having you among them at last, betrayed itself through all the assumed respect and profound sympathy. Oh ! that I were by your side ! I am sure no one can help showing you proper attention, but I cannot be grateful, because I am dying of envy ; jealous unto death of everybody who is allowed to wait upon you, while I am forced to remain so far away.’

It was not without reluctance, that Emma, who had left the Countess, as she hoped, to repose, ventured to risk disturbing her by delivering this letter, even though she could not guess its contents. She opened the door with so much caution, it was unheard ; and as she did so, a low sound fell on her ear, that thrilled her with awe and emotion. It was the voice of prayer and thanksgiving—broken, feeble, and exhausted—but so full of tenderness and yearning unutterable, Mrs. Henry Lyndon felt as if to intrude would be profanation. She laid the letter on the table, closed the door as noiselessly as she opened it, and hurried to see how far Adelaide, whom she had dreaded meeting before, was in a state to be comforted.

To her great relief, she found her much calmer than she could have expected ; very worn, very much cast down, but resigned to accept her fate, whatever it might be. One burden, at least, was gone ; she had confessed her wrong-doing, and humbled herself for it—and of the comfort of humility no harshness could deprive her. The refreshment of prayer to One who never turns away, and the sympathy of those about her, never more welcome than now, kept her spirit from sinking when once its first agony was past ; and it was a relief to them all that, at any rate, her feverish watching was over. But the very meekness of her sorrow only aggravated the resentment of her friends. Penelope, while petting her as if she were a child, could hardly look her in the face without a growl ; or Lucy, without wiping her eyes ; and Mr. Lyndon, between the affront shown to the whole family in her person, and the irritation of Henry's letter, was in a state of mind not easily to be described or endured.

Half the evening he walked up and down the room, revolving what ought to be done ; and the result appeared the next morning, when, everything being ready for his immediate departure for London, he sent up a formal message to the Countess, requesting, if convenient, to be allowed the honour of an interview.

He was admitted without a moment's hesitation on the part of Lady Delaunay, whom he found in her easy chair, making an effort to write a letter—rather a slow and painful one in the bruised condition of her hand and arm. She returned his ceremonious greeting with her most winning courtesy, thanking him for the opportunity of expressing to himself that deep sense of his goodness and hospitality, which she was in the act of expressing, as well as her helplessness would allow, to those who would feel it as she did, and would most probably remember it longer.

‘Madam,’ said Mr. Lyndon, drawing in his chair opposite hers, clearing his throat, and pulling down his waistcoat, as was his wont when about to deliver an opinion, or make a speech, ‘my house, my family, my servants, are all at your ladyship’s disposal, and you honour us beyond our deserts in accepting our poor services, and approving them. Your name has long been revered in this house, and since we have been allowed—ahem!—to witness those dignified virtues of which we have hitherto only heard, that reverence has deepened into admiration. But there is one subject—’ again he cleared his throat, and tried hard not to appear embarrassed, ‘to which I would ask permission to draw your ladyship’s attention. Have I that permission? My time is short, being compelled to go up to London on business.’

Lady Delaunay bowed, with a slight change of countenance. He bowed in return, very low.

‘I thank you, madam. It is a matter of deep interest to myself, as well as to another. Our family have long and painfully felt the involuntary wrong, inflicted by one dearly loved and early lost member on *yours*. Circumstances have convinced us that the wrong has been grievously felt on your side. It would be a deep source of satisfaction to me and mine, if we could be assured from your ladyship’s own lips, that you cherish no resentment against any of us.’

‘My dear sir,’ said Lady Delaunay, after a short struggle for composure, ‘I should very ill deserve the esteem you are good enough to express so highly, if I felt resentment where I have received no injury; or if I could ever remember your kindness, and that of my gentle nurses, without more gratitude than can find vent in words.’

She held out her hand to Mr. Lyndon, who bowed over it—almost *à la Grandison*.

‘Then, madam,’ he continued, gravely, ‘in extending your good-will to all members of my family, I trust you will not do me the discourtesy to exclude my son’s widow and her only child.’

There was a pause; Lady Delaunay’s eyes gleamed brightly on him for a moment, and were then bent on the ground; but Mr. Lyndon was resolved not to be daunted, and having got the range, reloaded with all speed for another shot.

‘No one can dispute your right to feel displeasure towards that lady, or to show it in any way you deem most fitting; but to a mind like Lady Delaunay’s, it will not be difficult to conceive, in what a painful posi-

tion *we* are placed—what a marked slight is put upon our house in the eyes of the world, and more especially our own immediate circle of friends and neighbours—when it is known that so distinguished a member of the family is refused an entrance into her own mother's room. I will say no more; it is not for me to urge such a reason; but I must own I should take it as a real favour, and should leave home with a much easier mind, if your ladyship would permit me to present to you my daughter-in-law and my grandson.'

'Sir,' said Lady Delaunay, after another pause, and a heavy sigh, of whose bitterness he could form but little idea; 'a request urged by you at such a time and in such terms, it is impossible for me to refuse. You will, I trust, do me the justice to distinguish between the natural displeasure I at first felt on the occasion of the marriage, and the subsequent causes of alienation between myself and my daughter. The one might be construed into an affront to your family—the other had no connexion with it. I never intended to leave your house without seeing my daughter; but I would gladly have waited till I was equal to entering into such explanations as she might be able to give, and which might have rendered our intercourse more satisfactory to both. But as she is too impatient to wait, and you put it in such a manner as to leave me no choice, I have only to request it may be done as quickly as is convenient—my strength and nerve not being what they were.'

Mr. Lyndon needed no second hint; he strode triumphantly into the drawing-room, where the family were all awaiting his departure, and laying one hand on Lady Adelaide, and the other on Walter, desired

them to come with him directly. In silent amazement they obeyed; he gave them no time to ask questions, but went up-stairs three steps at a time, straight to Lady Delaunay's door. Then he turned to his daughter-in-law with his grandest smile. 'Adelaide, my dear, I have obtained permission to lead you and your boy into your mother's presence. Come in.'

He opened the door, and Adelaide, as if in a dream, crossed the threshold at last.

She saw nothing, heard nothing, save mist, and a rushing sound: but she felt herself drawn on by Mr. Lyndon's supporting arm, and then that he was putting her hand into that of her mother. The touch recalled her scattered senses—she looked up: Lady Delaunay was standing to receive her, weakness and illness thrown aside as by the power of her will; her shrunken figure drawn up erect, her face composed and austere.

'Mr. Lyndon has made it a matter of personal favour to himself, and of respect to his family, that I should consent to see you, Adelaide. I owe him and them too much to refuse a first request. We will endeavour to disturb their domestic peace no more with the sight of our unhappy divisions.'

And drawing her daughter forward, she slightly kissed her on the brow, and resumed her seat.

Adelaide neither moved nor spoke; she seemed frozen into a statue. One touch, one word, one look of tenderness—and she would have flung herself on her mother's bosom, and poured forth the burning tide of affection that swelled her heart almost to suffocation; but that icy tone—that repelling quietness—that regal kiss of courtesy, not of love—spell-bound every impulse,

and she stood as a criminal before a judge, drooping, silent, and motionless.

Mr. Lyndon, who had pictured to himself a touching scene of reconciliation, was disappointed, half-inclined to be angry, and rather at a loss how to proceed. After waiting in vain for his daughter-in-law to speak, however, he drew Walter forward. 'My only grandson, Lady Delaunay—mine and *yours*. Let me hope you will never find him unworthy either name.'

'I trust so,' said the Countess, looking kindly in Walter's blushing face, half shy, half defiant. 'There is no trace of India in those cheeks, Mr. Lyndon; they do credit to your fine moors. What do you mean to be, my little man?'

'A philosopher, like Sir Humphry Davy and Faraday,' said Walter.

'Indeed! You are modest, at any rate. And what do you know of either?'

Walter fidgetted, and looked up to his mamma for help.

'Indeed, Lady Delaunay,' said Mr. Lyndon, coming in to the rescue, 'his knowledge has been rather a dangerous thing sometimes, both to himself and other people; but whatever he has learned, either of science or anything else worth knowing, he owes to his only teacher—his mother.'

Lady Delaunay's eyes rested for a moment on that mother's down-cast face, and then on that of her boy; it required no small effort to maintain her tranquil ease of manner.

'I will not question your being a willing pupil, my child, if Davy and Faraday are your models; but have you learned also to be a dutiful and obedient son?'

His eyes filled suddenly. The remembrance of his first rebellion had never left him, and his face grew scarlet as he honestly blurted out, 'I *did* disobey mamma once; but I was very, *very* sorry.'

His grandmother's countenance softened strangely.

'Cherish that sorrow, my boy, and let that one offence be the last; so will you spare yourself and her in after-life the heaviest burden you can bear. God have you in His holy keeping for ever, my grandson!' she continued, laying her hand on his rough, curly head. 'Follow Him as your Father and Guide in your youth, and when you are as old as I am, you will find in Him whatever else you may have lost.'

She bent over him as she spoke, and kissed him with a solemn tenderness that filled him with wonder and awe. He glanced hurriedly at his mother's face—saw her quivering lip, and the large tears gathering heavily in her drooping eyelids, and with an impulse that broke down all constraint and ceremony, threw his arms impetuously round Lady Delaunay's neck—whispering so as only she could hear, 'Oh, grandmamma!—she *is* so sorry too!'

Lady Delaunay's firmness began to fail; she pressed him to her bosom, in spite of the pain of his energetic hug; and then signed to Mr. Lyndon to take him away. He did not require his grandfather's shocked look of surprise and rebuke, still less his hint to go; he was so terribly ashamed of what he had just done, that he could not have stayed a minute longer to please anybody, and made but one bolt out of the room, out of the house, and to the remotest corner of the garden; wishing for nothing so much in the whole world, as to be able to hide himself in some hole where nobody

would ever find him again ! Mr. Lyndon, whose time was nearly up, was beginning something about not intruding any longer, and seemed to expect Adelaide to retire with him ; but Lady Delaunay observing she had a few words to say to her daughter, that would not detain her long, he was too glad to make his bow, and leave them together.

‘ I do not wish to intrude upon your private affairs from any idle curiosity,’ said Lady Delaunay, after a short silence, still preserving the cold gentleness with which she had spoken first ; ‘ but I should be glad to know, if not inconvenient to yourself, how far you are dependent on these kind relations ?’

Lady Adelaide tried to answer, but her throat was parched, and the power of utterance seemed gone. Her mother saw this, rose with an effort, and brought her a glass of water. ‘ Take your own time,’ she said, quietly ; ‘ I would rather you did not answer till you are able to command yourself. We have neither of us strength or nerves to spare, and must husband them well. Can you reply to my questions now, or would you rather defer it to another opportunity ?’

‘ I am ready,’ said Adelaide, calmly. She had recovered in some degree her presence of mind, and was resolved not to give way. Lady Delaunay half turned away from her towards the fire, so as not to embarrass her by her looks, in case, as she secretly dreaded to find, the questions proved difficult to answer.

‘ In what circumstances are you left ?’

‘ The legacy of my uncle Conway——’ she began, reluctantly.

‘ That, I am aware, is secured to you ; but your own fortune ?’

Lady Adelaide was silent: the silence was understood.

‘The interest of that legacy, then, is the main source of your income?’

‘It is.’

‘You bear your part, of course, in the household expenses out of it?’

‘Yes; Mr. Lyndon would not have allowed it, but I insisted.’

‘Perfectly right. But that must leave a small balance for yourself and your child.’ She turned round suddenly, and looked at her as if she would pierce her soul. ‘Tell me at once, what are your debts?’

‘My debts?’ repeated Adelaide, surprised and almost indignant, ‘what makes you suppose——’

‘Stay! hear and understand me before you answer. I dare say you think I am rich; many do—for as of late years I have mixed but little in society, the natural inference would be that I am hoarding my income. I tell you plainly, it is not so. When you left me, the daughter’s portion that would have been yours in time, became a trust; and as a trust I devoted it, partly to recompense the dutiful affection of Charlotte Conway, and the rest to works of mercy among the young and friendless. Such as they are, these works have become, in their turn, a responsibility. I dare not hold back the support upon which they have been accustomed to depend; I could not, if I would, settle a fortune upon you now. But to free you from the degradation of debt, I would make any other sacrifice that might be necessary. None should ever know it but myself, and I should never allude to it again. Pause, then, and

weigh it well; make me your friend by openness, and free yourself *now*,'—she paused emphatically on the word, 'or *never*! Only, as your father's child, be *true*!'

'Mother, look at me! Could I meet your eye if I meant to deceive you? Alas! I *did* deceive you once, and that makes you doubt me now. But, thank God, who kept me back from this sorrow among so many, I am without a debt in the world. Say you believe me!'

'I see,' said Lady Delaunay, after a brief but keen scrutiny of her earnest features, 'I have been misinformed. But are you quite sure that there is no obligation—no matter how incurred—probably without your knowledge or sanction, which may hereafter be a burden to your boy, such as he may have no means of shaking off, and will feel it a personal dishonour to bear? Think before you answer, and ask yourself, whether an unsullied name be not a heritage worth a little pain to secure for him?'

Adelaide's eyes dilated; at first with vague consternation, then with a sudden flash of understanding.

'Mother!' she whispered, hoarsely, 'who has dared to poison your mind like this?'

The Countess looked up in haughty surprise.

'Who is it,' repeated Adelaide, advancing a step nearer, 'that has made you think my husband was a dishonoured gambler? Speak!'

Eye to eye their bright glances met; and Lady Delaunay read her own spirit in that of her daughter. She turned away without a direct reply, merely observing, in a tone of cold severity, 'Since this is the tone in which the conversation is to be carried on, we will, if you please, close it at once.'

'Oh, no, no!' said Adelaide, imploringly, sinking on one knee before her, and pressing her mother's dress to her lips, 'forgive me—bear with me a little longer!—say what you will, believe what you will of *me*—but just and noble as you are, spare *him* whom you never knew; whose only fault towards you was loving me too well; who left me but two precious charges to shield with my life—his child, and his good name!'

Lady Delaunay leaned back in her chair, trembling, and well-nigh overcome.

'Your rebuke would be more just,' she said, presently, 'had I intended anything but a real service. Still, you are right, and in this also I have been misled—strangely so,' she added, putting her hand to her head, as a vague but terrible suspicion began to dawn upon her; such as had arisen once before, and been repelled as an injustice. The sudden change of countenance alarming her daughter, she rose to offer her support; but this Lady Delaunay's lifted finger gently but decidedly declined.

'One thing more,' she said, in a faint voice, 'and then I will release you, and try to rest. You mentioned your boy; what are you doing about his education?'

'It has been my wish to send him to school, when my own plans were arranged; but nothing has been decided yet, on account of——'

'Of want of means, perhaps? It seems to cost you a great deal to own it.'

'It does, at this moment,' said Adelaide, with difficulty suppressing her tears.

'That obstacle shall be removed; education is a matter of right, not of favour, and the loss of a year at his age is not easily repaired. But you have plans;

may I ask what they are? You hesitate. Are you afraid, or ashamed of being open with me?’

‘No, no, my dearest mother,’ faltered Lady Adelaide, once more kneeling at her feet, and venturing this time to lay her hand on hers, ‘I only hesitated because I have now no plans—no wish—but to obey you in all things, and know no will but yours!’

‘And if,’ said Lady Delaunay, neither encouraging nor repulsing her, ‘I were to take you at your word—what, after all I have told you, do you hope to receive from me?’

Adelaide bowed her head on her mother’s knee to hide the tears that would no longer be kept back. ‘If not your love—if not your confidence—at least one such blessing as you gave my boy!’

For a moment her mother’s hand was suspended above her, as if it yearned to bestow it even then; but stern resolution prevailed, and when Lady Delaunay spoke, her voice betrayed little of what she really felt.

‘Be it so, Adelaide; I accept your obedience on trial; and you shall have full opportunity to prove your sincerity. My trust once shaken, I tell you again, and frankly, it is by *actions*, not by words, that it is to be restored. Rise now, and leave me; and let the future atone for the past.’

The tone was decisive; Adelaide rose submissively, and retired without another word. Emma, full of anxious sympathy, was waiting to meet her in the passage. She saw in a moment how it was, even before she spoke.

‘Do not ask me, Emma, or I shall break down. Yes, I have seen her, spoken to her, been kissed by

her ; and I know as well as if she had told me, that she will never love me again. It is too late.'

Emma tried to cheer her with the recollection that the worst was over ; she had now a chance of winning back what she had lost, and every step gained was an encouragement to hope and trust for more.

' So it is, and I will try, as well as I can. I have not deserved even this ; but oh, Emma ! that quiet coldness—I understand it so well—it makes a coward of me. Once in my childhood, I had an outbreak of passionate rebellion, and stood out against her a whole day. When night came, I was subdued and repentant, and she told me she forgave me, but she should decide in the morning what my punishment should be. To this day I have not forgotten the terror in which I lay through the long dark hours, wondering what the morning would bring ; I have that terror strong upon me now. That there is some trial in store to test my powers of submission and compliance, I can read in every look, I can hear in every tone. Whatever it is, God give me strength to bear it, for I shall never resist her again. I am in her hands, and she may do with me what she will.'

CHAPTER XI.

No, 'tis slander;
 Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue
 Out-venoms all the worms of Nile.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE agitation of these two last days had a visible effect in retarding Lady Delaunay's recovery; instead of coming down-stairs and planning how to proceed on her journey, as she had confidently expected, she lost some of the ground already gained, and her nurses were glad of the additional help Lady Adelaide was now permitted to give. Emma had thus many opportunities of observing how matters stood between mother and daughter, and hardly knew what to think. Certainly, the coldness which Adelaide had felt so strongly, instead of diminishing, appeared to increase. Lady Delaunay, in her intervals of ease, would converse with the other ladies cheerfully and agreeably, fascinating them by her power of conversation and store of anecdote; but to her daughter, though constantly present, she seldom spoke at all, except to thank her occasionally for her services, or to beg her to spare herself unnecessary fatigue. The distinction made was so painfully marked, as to distress them all; and the consciousness of its being thus observed added tenfold to the difficulty Lady Adelaide found in taking it

patiently. A little while ago, to be in that room at all, had appeared a privilege that would compensate for everything else; but two days of this treatment made her begin to doubt whether it was not more trying than anything she had borne yet.

To be so near, and yet so wide apart—to see her smile on strangers, and pass her over as unworthy notice—to be reminded every hour in the most pointed manner, that she was only there on sufferance and probation—to receive those polite thanks for what she did, but never one loving glance or word—and all this before others, whose very pity took an irritating form—was, indeed, a sharp trial of a spirit so high and impulsive. But genuine contrition for the past made her accept it as a punishment deserved; without making any further attempts at conciliation, or testifying any resentment, she tacitly acquiesced in her sentence; performing every permitted service, and submitting to every galling slight, with a quiet patience, that was not without dignity; nor, as far as her own peace of mind went, even then without reward.

She could not see—but Emma did, and it helped her to hope, and to understand—how, when she believed herself unnoticed, those earnest, searching eyes would gradually settle upon her, as their natural object; marking the changes wrought by time on the once familiar image—noting the womanly grace of outline—the thoughtful cast of features, over which anxiety and grief had of late thrown a delicacy, betraying wasted strength, without impairing their loveliness—resting there sometimes with the grave compassion of a judge, sometimes with the stern admiration of an adversary—sometimes, Emma thought, with such a look as Joseph might have

worn, when he turned from his humbled brethren and wept, and then—took Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

It was on the afternoon of the third day after Mr. Lyndon's departure, that Lady Delaunay, feeling herself so much better as to give hopes of her soon leaving her room, expressed a wish for Walter's company ; and that young gentleman, in spite of much rebellion and concealment, was compelled to go in and do his best to be agreeable. Happily, it never took long to set him at his ease ; his grandmamma's kindness soon dispelled his awe, and that once gone, his tongue speedily began to rattle. There was no one else present but his mother, who sat at work, as usual, a little apart ; looking very pale and quiet, and decidedly, he thought, as if she wanted amusing. So encouraged by Lady Delaunay's indulgence, he launched out into all his favourite stories and projects—probing her scientific knowledge without scruple, and making a very liberal display of his own ; little aware of the effect he was producing on one, at least, of his hearers. But the truth was, the strain of the last few days had begun to tell on Lady Adelaide's nerves, and she was feeling just then so tired and out of spirits, that the smallest additional burden was too much to bear. Her boy's prattle, which at any other time she could have tolerated, if she could not exactly enjoy, now oppressed and fatigued her ; for she was in constant nervous expectation of his saying or alluding to something that would displease or pain. When he chattered about his tastes and studies, she felt as if she had taught him nothing, and that his grandmother was observing it ; his very laugh jarred her ear, as if it were a cruel derision of her anxiety : and when at last

it came to 'dear old Brown John's stories about India and mamma,' she could bear it no longer. Interrupting him with an abruptness very unlike her ordinary manner, she told him he was only tiring his grand-mamma, and if he talked so much, he must be sent out of the room. In his surprise at such a rebuke, he hardly knew what to say; but Lady Delaunay, signing to him to stay where he was, turned on her daughter a look of calm inquiry, that seemed waiting for an explanation of her behaviour. As none was given, she observed, very coldly, 'He is not tiring *me*, on the contrary; but as I am afraid it is too much for you, pray do not let me detain you any longer in this room.'

It was the overflowing drop in the full cup. Lady Adelaide put down her work, rose hastily, seemed on the point of speaking, but instead of doing so, hurried to the door; not so quickly but that Lady Delaunay could see how the blood started from her compressed lip, and the burning glow that spread over her face. She shaded her own with her hand for a moment, and then, making Walter sit down at her feet, encouraged him, while her fingers played caressingly with his thick curls, to talk away as much as he pleased, which was no stinted licence. Once fairly launched on the subject of his mamma, Walter never knew how to stop, and thanks to Brown John's reminiscences and his own, he had plenty to tell of which his auditor had never dreamed; while the glimpses so unconsciously given of the character so long misrepresented—the resolution, patience, self-devotion, and courage displayed under circumstances that fully tested their truth, brought a glow of pride to

the mother's cheek and heart, such as she had thought she could feel no more.

But Adelaide, meanwhile, conscious of nothing but the peril she had so narrowly escaped, fled to the first quiet corner she could find, and panted for breath like a hunted deer. Hardly aware how much bodily weariness and irritation had to do with it, she could only feel that she had been within a hair's breadth of losing her self-control, and of retorting in the bitterness of the moment, what she could never have recalled—or have forgiven herself for uttering, even if her mother could. And if this had been the case, when they had only been three days together, how could she feel secure, that the next impulse might not prove too strong, or too sudden, even for escape? A yearning for comfort and advice, even if accompanied by reproof, made her resolve to try and find Doctor Home, whom, since the day of the poor woman's death, she had only seen for a few minutes in the presence of others. She was just on her way to her room to equip for the walk, when an excited maid came running after her, to announce there were three ladies in the parlour, who had called to see Lady Delaunay. Miss Lyndon was out, and Miss Lucy hoped she would be so good as to go and speak to them.

In no small wonder, she complied at once, and was greeted by one of the longest-drawn curtsies she had ever seen in her life; the skirts of the visitor crackling during the operation like a Christmas fire, and her whole toilette and bearing elaborately expressive of her profound sense of the reverence due to rank.

'Lady Adelaide Lyndon I believe I have the honour of addressing,' said this lady, with a second edition of

the curtsey, enlarged and improved, to the great increase of Lady Adelaide's astonishment at her mother's visitor, though she was too well-bred to let it appear. A quick glance at the other strangers, while she was requesting them to be seated, told her there was some broad line of demarcation between them and the head of the party; as the taller of the two was plainly dressed, and the younger, her face covered with a brown veil, her clothes rumpled and dusty, as if she had been travelling in a *diligence* for thirty-eight hours, kept her head down, and looked the very picture of helpless misery and despair.

'I have taken the liberty of calling, Lady Adelaide,' said the first lady, as soon as they were seated, 'not to intrude on the Countess Delaunay, of whose accident and illness I heard with feelings of the deepest regret and alarm, but simply in the discharge of my duty. My name,' handing a card to Lady Adelaide, with a low bend of the head, 'may not be entirely unknown to your ladyship, who has honoured this neighbourhood with your presence now for some little time. Your ladyship is probably aware that the Countess did me the honour of visiting the College of which I am the Principal, a few days ago?'

Lady Adelaide, not deeming it necessary to say it was the first she had heard of it, bowed politely, and waited to know—what then?

'Lady Delaunay, madam, was in a state of distressing anxiety respecting a young lady in whom she felt great interest, and who had been guilty of the unpardonable ingratitude and imprudence of withdrawing from her protection, and plunging her generous and distinguished friends into all the distress and anxiety

consequent on such a step. Her ladyship, with the acuteness of a powerful mind, traced the fugitive to my unpretending but cheerful abode (where instruction and improvement walk hand in hand), but too late to arrest her flight. She had only remained for a brief period, and unaware of the circumstances, I had no reason for detaining her. To-day, however, she came to me again; and deeply impressed with a sense of what is due to the Countess Delaunay, I felt it my duty not to suffer her to quit my custody, till I had restored her to that of her noble protectress, by whom her fate may be decided.'

There was a pause; Lady Adelaide looked at the other two, and at once perceived which was the culprit, for she dropped her head on the table, and hid her face in her arms. The elder, who had watched Lady Adelaide from her first entrance with the keenest curiosity, laughed at this, and tried to raise her companion from her forlorn attitude. 'Look up, Lilla! whatever Lady Delaunay may think of your *escapade*, this lady is the last who will be hard upon you, if all be true that people say.' And she gave Lady Adelaide a sarcastic look, that, unprovoked as it was, astounded her not a little.

'Who is *this* young lady, may I ask?' she inquired, with a slight touch of haughtiness in the manner of the question, that mightily impressed the Principal.

'I beg your ladyship's pardon for not presenting Miss Unwin, one of the lady assistants in the College, herself a *protégée* of the Countess, whose liberality in her education will, I trust, be rewarded by the unlimited benefit showered on the rising generation of this popular neighbourhood.'

Lady Adelaide's eyes met Miss Unwin's, and the latter immediately answered the look. 'Yes ; I have had the happiness of being under Lady Delaunay's care ; and if your ladyship wishes to give her pleasure, you have only to mention Belle Unwin, and assure her she will never forget what she owes her, especially for her goodness on the day she left her house !'

'How dare you, Belle?' interrupted Lilla Brittan, starting from her depressed attitude, 'how *can* you be so wicked?' Then at the sound of her own voice, and seeing Lady Adelaide's surprise, she covered her face again and burst into tears.

'You see how it is, madam,' said the Principal, shaking her head. 'This unfortunate young lady is not fit to be trusted to herself, and in my responsible position as the head of a respectable, and, I may say, fashionable Academy, it would be out of the question for me to undertake the charge of her—unless, indeed, at the express request of the Countess Delaunay, and under peculiar regulations. I have done my duty in delivering her safely to her friends, and I leave the rest now in your ladyship's hands, to do as you may think proper. I trust the Countess Delaunay will approve what I have thought right and fitting to do.'

'But,' interposed Lady Adelaide, not a little embarrassed, 'my mother, as you are aware, is too unwell to be applied to just now ; I dare not run any risk of exciting her—'

'Certainly, madam ; your ladyship must know best ; I have discharged my duty, and hope for her ladyship's approval as my reward. Should the Countess Delaunay feel disposed to place her young friend under my care,

she will meet with all the advantages of a finished education, combined with the refined endearments of a home. I believe your ladyship has my card. I will take the liberty of adding a copy of the Prospectus and Rules. Miss Unwin, we are trespassing on Lady Adelaide Lyndon's valuable time. I have the honour to wish your ladyship good afternoon. *Good afternoon !*

And with another prolonged curtsey, gracefully turned off into a sweeping glide, she skilfully accomplished her retreat. Before Miss Unwin, however, had made many steps in the same direction, she came back, and stood looking full in Lady Adelaide's face.

'I don't know why I was insolent to you—I beg your pardon.'

'It is granted,' said Lady Adelaide, mildly. Her strange visitor caught her hand, kissed it, and let it go.

'Yes, I beg your pardon, and I am glad that silly child is in your hands: try and help her, if you can, and don't let Lady Delaunay make of her the miserable wretch she has made of me, of whom, at one moment, a merciful word would have made her slave for life! Whose I am now, she neither knows nor cares, perhaps; but some day she will, and you may tell her from me, she never did half as much good in all her years of charity, as she did harm to me that day!'

She dashed out of the room before she could be detained, and the vehicle that brought them was heard immediately after grinding the gravel as it moved away.

Lady Adelaide, sorely perplexed by this new and unexpected charge, turned to look at her prisoner. She had flung herself down on the rug, with her face buried on her knees, rocking herself to and fro with sobs of such deep misery as would have touched a much harder

heart than that of Adelaide Lyndon. As gently as she could, she endeavoured to persuade her to rise and explain, but for some time to no purpose ; her soothing voice and manner, however, had the effect of stilling the stormy sobs, and Lilla at last ventured to look up. The pity expressed in the beautiful face gave her heart ; she clasped Lady Adelaide's knees imploringly.

‘ You look kind and good—yes, you do ; and I will tell you the whole truth, and do whatever you bid me ; but don't, please, please don't give me up to Lady Delaunay ! I know she will never forgive me, after all this ; and if she takes me back to London, and shames me before everybody as she did Belle Unwin, I shall die, I know I shall. And she will either do that, or something worse. Miss Conway says she *never* forgives ; and she said herself, when she punished at all, she punished in earnest, and it frightens me. Oh, do help me to go away to service, or to teach, or anything that is honest and will give me bread—I don't care what, only don't keep me for her to see, pray—*pray* don't !’

The young childish face, streaming with tears, and disfigured with grief, dust, and fatigue, was more than Lady Adelaide could bear to see ; and finding she would not be raised, she sat down, and let her head rest on her lap, taking off her battered bonnet, and parting the tangled hair from the hot forehead and swollen eyes.

‘ My poor child,’ she said, in a tone full of pity, ‘ I have no right and no wish to force you into anything ; but you have been left in my hands, and though it is but little I have in my power, I will do the best I can for you, if you will trust yourself to me.’

‘ Oh, yes, I will ! I love your face already. You

will not be like Miss Conway, will you? You will not pet and cosset me one minute, and set everybody against me the next, I am sure. I will trust you in everything.'

'Then tell me who you are, and what you have been doing; for at present I am quite in the dark.'

Lilla choked her sobs, and in as few words as she could, told her tale. Her flight had been one continued series of terrors and disappointments; when Belle Unwin refused to help her, she had gone on with the good-natured farmer, because she knew not where else to go, and his wife kept her two days, while she was trying to hear of some situation, and when she told her she could stay there no longer, she had gone on to the next town in hopes of finding something to do; but her money was nearly gone, and nobody liked to have anything to do with her. She had no idea what a dreadful thing it was to go about by oneself, till she came to try. She took a lodging, and the woman seemed to think she was not respectable, and made her pay a week's rent in advance, and she had to sell some of her clothes; and she tried to get needlework at a large outfitting shop, but they would not employ her without a reference; so she made her way back to the College to ask Belle Unwin; and directly she appeared, the Principal locked her into a room by herself, and then, in spite of all her entreaties, brought her here.

'And it was on *your* account, then,' said Lady Adelaide, when she paused, 'to find you out, and bring you back, that my mother took this journey?'

'Yes, I suppose so. I had no idea she would.'

The tears stood in Adelaide's eyes. 'How she must love you!'

Lilla looked up in wonder, struck by her tone. 'I had not thought of that.'

'Think of it *now*, then. Think of what she has done for you—of the anxiety you must have given her, of the pain and illness of which you have unwittingly been the cause—and then decide, whether you will not rather bear whatever she may think right, than persist in grieving and harassing so dear and affectionate a friend?'

'Will you speak for me, then, and tell her how sorry I am?'

'*I*, my poor child? I would not do you so ill a service. If she still loves you, you need nothing more; and instead of pitying—the bitterness of heart that would not be restrained, made her hurry on, unmindful of the effect of her words, 'I could envy you—yes, and the poorest and most afflicted of those, among whom she pours out so freely that precious love, denied to none—but me!'

Lilla Brittan half raised herself, and looked eagerly in her face, almost forgetting her own misfortunes in the interest suddenly awakened. Many words and circumstances, to which she had hardly attended at the time, returned forcibly now to her remembrance, and she began to understand them better. Whatever she was going to say, however, was effectually stopped by a sudden giddiness from long fasting and excitement, which seized her directly she attempted to rise; so that she was only saved from falling full length on the rug by Lady Adelaide catching her in her arms. Somehow, this struck her as being so palpably ludicrous, that she burst out laughing; and then, because she laughed, felt shocked at herself; and the more amazed

Lady Adelaide looked at this unexpected revulsion of spirits, the more ashamed she grew, and the more she laughed, till the tears again ran down her cheeks, hardly dry from the last. It was not till her companion had forced her into her chair, and was moving towards the door, that she recovered sufficient voice to gasp out a sort of apology and explanation, that she was only horridly silly, that was all; was she going away offended?

‘No; I am only going to see what can be done for you; if you will keep quiet till I come back I do not wish to lock the door—can I trust you on parole?’

‘I won’t stir from this chair without your leave,’ said Lilla; and as the laughter had exhausted the little strength she had left, it seemed probable she would keep her word. Lady Adelaide hastened up to the nursery, by courtesy so called; where, as she expected, she found Emma playing with the little one, and her small maid making tea.

‘Oh, I am so glad you are come!’ was her first greeting; ‘here has this little monkey been so full of antics, nobody can manage her but you. See, she knows her playfellow directly; I can hardly hold her.’

‘Her playfellow has her hands full just now,’ said Adelaide, unable, however, to resist the temptation, and forgetting weariness of limbs or of heart, as she caught the laughing child, and allowed her to perform her favourite piece of mischief, of pulling down her small lace cap, and a mass of dark hair along with it. ‘Be so kind, nurse, as to pour me out a cup of tea, and cut some good slices of bread and butter, will you?’

‘Certainly, my lady,’ said ‘nurse,’ somewhat

astonished, but with a reverential curtesy; for she held Lady Adelaide in the profoundest admiration and awe, treasuring up every word that fell from her lips, for the future annihilation of her compeers in London. While she bustled off to fetch a tray and cup and saucer, Adelaide explained to Emma what was going on.

‘That accounts for the uneasy state in which your mother has been so often, and which I could not make out. She has dropped hints about a task left unfinished, and what she must do as soon as she was strong enough, which I now see referred to this. What can you do for her?’

‘I cannot keep her here; there is no bed to spare, and the report of her being in the house might startle my mother suddenly. I think, as soon as she has had some refreshment, I shall take her to the rectory, and beg Dr. Home to receive her till we know what is best to be done.’

‘You cannot do better,’ said Emma, ‘if the walk is not too much—you are looking very tired. I was in hopes you were resting, as Walter and his grand-mamma, when I peeped in just now, seemed to be growing friends as fast as you and little Emma. How can you let her pull your hair so?’

‘There, good-bye, my little Emma,’ said Adelaide, shaking her off with a parting kiss, and re-arranging her head-gear as best she might. ‘If I never had a heavier load to bear, or a harder hand to deal with, I should be much better off than I deserve.’

Armed with her tray, which ‘nurse,’ almost on her knees, entreated vainly to be allowed to carry for her, she passed down the gallery: her mother’s door was

ajar, and as she drew near, she heard what arrested her steps—a well-remembered sound of her happiest childish days. Lady Delaunay possessed a wonderful memory, her powers of recitation were inexhaustible, and the first poetry her daughter could recollect to have loved, was that which had been so beautifully repeated to her—a favourite reward for extra goodness in the nursery. How long it was since she had heard that old familiar sound ! She lingered, almost unconsciously, holding her breath not to lose a cadence of the sweet, though tremulous voice, which was delivering to Walter's admiring ears those verses of that most pathetic of humorists, inimitable Hood.

Love thy mother, little one !
Kiss and clasp her neck again !
Hereafter she may have a son
Shall kiss and clasp her neck in vain.
Love thy mother, little one !

Gaze upon her living eyes,
And mirror back their love for thee !
Hereafter thou mayst shudder sighs
To meet them—when they cannot see.
Gaze upon her living eyes !

Press her lips the while they glow !
With love that they have often told !
Hereafter thou mayst press in woe,
And kiss them, till thine own are cold.
Press her lips the while they glow !

Oh ! revere her raven hair,
Although it be not silver grey !
Too early, death, led on by care,
May snatch, save one dear lock, away.
Oh, revere her raven hair !

Pray for her at eve and morn,
That Heav'n may long the stroke defer;
For thou mayst live that hour forlorn,
When thou shalt ask to die with her.
Pray for her at eve and morn!

The voice ceased ; and Adelaide passed on : a quiet light glowing in her eyes, and a faint smile on her lips.

Lilla Brittan was rather ashamed to find herself so waited upon ; and not a little dismayed to hear she was to go to a clergyman's house. She had a vague dread of she knew not what, but it seemed made up of being lectured, made to read sermons, and having to teach in a Sunday-school what she did not know herself. Above all, she was sure she should laugh when she ought not, and be thought a heathen at once. However, Lady Adelaide re-assured her in some degree, and as soon as she had finished her welcome refreshment, did her best to tidy her appearance, straightening and wiping the crushed, dusty bonnet, and smoothing the disordered braids of hair, so as to make her look rather less forlorn than when she came.

'Where is your luggage, my dear—or have you none?'

'It was put in the hall,' was the answer ; and sure enough, there was an unsightly-looking bundle, at which Lady Adelaide shook her head. 'I will send that down to the Rectory afterwards, when we have ascertained if you can be received there. Do you feel rested enough to come at once?'

'I feel quite another creature.'

'Then try and act like one in future.' And her own toilette being speedily performed, they set out

forthwith, Adelaide wishing especially to escape a discussion with Lucy or Penelope.

When they came within sight of the Rectory, Miss Lyndon was just turning away from it. Adelaide immediately entered the churchyard to avoid her, without noticing how reluctantly her companion followed. The instant they passed the wicket, the bell began to toll, Lilla crept to Lady Adelaide's side, and took her arm nervously.

'A funeral, my dear, so we shall not be able to speak to the rector just yet. Do you mind waiting?'

'Oh no! but it sounds so dismal. I cannot bear to hear a bell toll—I never could. Oh, look, there is the grave ready dug, and an old man sitting by it. Do come away!'

'I must speak to him first,' said Lady Adelaide, and she went up to the stone on which the old man was seated, and touched him on the arm. He looked up with a start, and made his salute in silence.

'I did not expect to find you here, sergeant.'

He pointed to the grave. 'Her bed is ready, and she'll sleep there as sound as she did under my roof. Man's breath, and woman's, which is worse, can harm her no longer, let them call her what they will. That bell lets no tongue be heard but its own; it gets the last word, and keeps it.'

'Is she to be buried to-day? I had almost forgotten; I have had so much to think of. How is her poor mother?'

'God help her, for she needs help. She don't seem to find her goodness much comfort; she'd give ten years of her life to put ten minutes' breath into that poor thing's body, who might have died like a dog long

ago, for all she did to save her. Ay, my lady, death is a grand purifier! Those whom folks wouldn't touch at arm's length before, they would carry in their bosoms then. Their faults look so little when it is too late to forgive them; and ours, when it is too late to own them, grow up so wondrous big!

Lady Adelaide made no answer, but stood looking thoughtfully down upon the dark and narrow bed.

'There are some now,' he went on, 'as wouldn't have let that poor soul darken their doors if she had asked it on her knees—directly she's gone, they come and ask all about her, and what they can do, and one sends a bit, and another sends a bit, that nobody wants or asks for—and they want to be doing this, and that, and the other, and not a hard word to be had among 'em all! Ay, but *he's* a grand peacemaker. Charity covers a multitude of sins, they say; but he does more, for he *buries* 'em.'

'There is comfort in that, at least,' said Lady Adelaide, still gazing wistfully into the empty grave.

'So there is, my lady. Maybe, when I am lying hereabouts, as I should like to be, and you pass me on your way to church, you will give me a kind look now and then, and nobody think the worse of you for it, though they have abused you often enough, I know, for being so good to such an old heathen now.'

'Ah, sergeant, I should care very little for what any one said, if I could only think I had any influence over you.'

He looked half inclined to resent the imputation, but she went on, before he could interrupt her. 'If I could only see you go to church too—only hope you

were turning to God *now*—the only Friend who can make this last bed one of rest for either of us—'

'Stop, my lady; I just ask you this: what will He care for the ashes and cinders of a life that was promised to Him years ago, when it was worth having, and never paid Him yet?'

The bell tolled again before she could answer; the funeral was seen slowly approaching; it was not the moment, even if she could have found voice, to pour out the arguments with which her heart was full; she could only point once more to the church with a look of earnest entreaty, and say, 'Try Him—and see!'

To her surprise, he looked up in her face, and a softened change came over his own. 'God bless those eyes of yours—so I *will*.'

There was no time for more; Lady Adelaide was obliged to hasten back to her young companion, to avoid appearing intrusive on the grief of the mother, who led the little girl by the hand.

'If you are too tired, or unwilling to stand here, Miss Brittan, will you wait for me in the vestry?'

'Oh, no, don't leave me by myself. I don't mind so long as I am with .you. How very gloomy all this is! Who are they going to bury?'

'A woman who did wrong when she was young, and repented; but for want of a friend just in time, fell into evil again, and consequently into misery and disease.'

'Oh, Lady Adelaide!' Lilla's eyes filled, and she clung to her, and said no more.

And now the rector in his surplice came out to meet the burden borne through the lych-gate; and his deep voice began the glorious words with which the service opens—

words, that to some of those who heard sounded as mysteriously new as when they were first spoken in Bethany.

Earth to earth—ashes to ashes—dust to dust. The outcast had found a refuge, and the houseless a home ; and she who when living had been shunned as an inmate, the Church laid to rest as a dear sister departed. And as the heavy clods fell on the humble coffin, there was not one of those who witnessed that was not more or less moved. The rector himself, not at all given to betraying feeling on these occasions, had some difficulty in completing the service, and his spectacles grew so dim, it was well he had it tolerably by heart. Lilla Brittan, impulsive and excitable at all times, leaned all her weight on her companion's arm, and sobbed as she thought of her father and mother. Over Adelaide's melancholy the solemn words stole like a gale of healing, as though it were a voice from her home in the far-off land, where the wanderer is welcome and the weary are at rest. What, after all, were the troubles and sorrows of this life, but the light affliction for a moment—for which strength was given when sought—out of which mercy was ever ready to spring—and whose eternal consolation was at hand, even at the doors ? It was just the refreshment she had needed, giving her the strength her day's burden required, at the moment when her own was gone.

Little did she know how much she would require, before that day was over.

No one appeared to notice them where they stood ; they saw the rector, when all was over, go up to Mrs. Dalton and her grandchild, and press them, as it seemed, to rest in his house ; nor was it till most of those whom curiosity or better motives had brought to the spot,

had withdrawn, that he discovered who was waiting. Then he came forward with extended hand, looking, Lady Adelaide thought, less cheerful than usual ; but for that the solemnity of the scene might account. His kindness was as hearty as ever, and as soon as he heard her difficulty, he was prompt in his offered assistance ; thanking her for letting him be useful, and trying to make his unexpected guest feel she was doing him and his grand-daughter the greatest favour imaginable. Still, he was not quite like himself, and more than once seemed to find it difficult to command his attention to what was told him ; so that Lady Adelaide, at last, ventured gently to express her fear that she was harassing him with her troubles, when he, perhaps, had enough of his own. He squeezed her hand tight, and as they moved slowly on, answered in some agitation, ‘ No, no, you do not harass me at all ; but it is very true—we all have our turn ; I *am* in trouble just now, though I cannot explain it. It is good for us all now and then—makes us feel for each other. Ah, I have felt a good deal for *you*—prayed for you, too, my dear, though I did walk off from you so uncivilly that day. Ousel told me what had happened, and I thought you would never get home if you knew ; but I could not have gone with you without letting it out, if my life had depended upon it. Well, I won’t ask questions ; I know it will all come right in time ; we must have patience ; we are all as blind as owls in the daytime, and cannot see a step before us ; and so all we can do is just to follow the Guide who *can*.’

He gave a great sigh as he said this, and then, in a more indifferent tone, asked if they had heard from Henry yet? No—his wife expected a letter that day.

Ah, she did, did she? If there was any particular news, would it be too much trouble to send and let him know? Lady Adelaide promised to do so when she sent Miss Brittan's clothes.

'I hope she will not be too great a tax upon you, sir; it is a real act of Christian charity to give her shelter.'

'Supposing it to be so (which I do not allow), you and Sergeant Wade have set too good an example not to be followed. What do you think he asked me just now? If I would promise he should be buried in the corner there, close to poor Mrs. Smith and Brown John. He chose the spot for her, and now hankers after it himself. I sometimes hope there is light in eventide yet reserved for him, after all. Ah, Mrs. Ball! as a brisk figure, baby in arms, suddenly stood curtsying in his path; 'I thought I saw you just now; this *is* being kind and neighbourly, to show a mark of respect to a stranger, especially such a poor one.'

'Well, indeed, sir, as to that poor body, when I saw what a decent, respectable mother she had, there was nothing I wouldn't ha' done for, I'm sure—nor Jem either, if it comes to that.'

'Take a lesson, then, Mrs. Ball, and do what you can for your neighbours, not when they do *not* want it, but when they *do*. And now, as you have brought that little one into the churchyard, when are you going to bring her to be received into the congregation, as a Christian child should?'

'Bless its heart, and that's what I wanted to ask you, when the good gentleman was likely to be back; he's the godfather, you know, sir, and it wouldn't be respectful not to wait for him.'

The rector's face twitched as if a sharp pang had

shot through it. 'Don't wait for him—I am sure he would rather you did not; but there—you shall hear. Good-bye.' But Mrs. Ball was not so easily got rid of, when disposed for conversation.

'Won't her ladyship please to look at the baby, as she saved its life? She is thriving and well, my lady, and feels her feet already, thanks to your goodness, though it's little thanks you got at the time, to my shame and sorrow, as Jem has throwed in my teeth ever since!'

Lady Adelaide paid the expected tribute to the child's good looks, and asked its name—an innocent question enough, but it astounded Mrs. Ball, and made the rector shrug his shoulders with a smile.

'Well, to be sure, my lady, and didn't you know, when Mr. Randolph, his own self, quite out of his own head, called her *Adelaide*. He did, indeed, my lady, and proud we all are that his godchild should be your namesake too!'

'There,' said Dr. Home, with a side glance at her face, when their loquacious acquaintance had at last allowed them to pass; 'that was rather a surprise for you, was it not? Ah, my dear, I could surprise you still more, but I won't. You have enough to think of just now, without that. Only if you do hear any news in the course of the day, you won't forget to send to me, will you? Come, Miss Brittan, welcome to the Rectory, and let us see how soon we can make you feel at home.'

It was now past five o'clock, but as it was a standing rule at the Manorhouse, whenever Mr. Lyndon was away, for the ladies to dine early and indulge in an elaborate tea, Lady Adelaide thought she should have

time just to go to the village shop for some articles Walter had wanted in a most particular hurry that afternoon, and which he would otherwise not be able to get till to-morrow. The said shop having one slight peculiarity in its otherwise faultless arrangements, that the article you asked for was invariably the last that could be found, if it was found at all; it was rather later than she expected when she turned her face homewards, her pocket stored with such elegant trifles as string, tin-tacks, and glue. A most unexpected pleasure was in store for her, however, before her walk was ended; for just as she passed Mr. Spindler's gate, that gentleman stepped out of it.

'My Lady Adelaide Lyndon herself! How extremely fortunate, and how singular! The very last person I was thinking of, and the one I most wished to see. I hope your ladyship is pretty well again? I was on my way to the Manorhouse this very moment, to inquire after your health, and that of the Countess Delaunay.'

The distant civility with which this was received did not seem to disconcert him at all; he planted himself in her way, so that she could not hurry past, without more rudeness than she had at her command.

'It is doubly fortunate that I have met you, my lady, because I have something very particular to say to you on business; and it will save time and trouble if you would please to step in for a few minutes, instead of my going on with you to the Manorhouse.'

'If you will be good enough, sir, to explain to what business you refer, I may be better able to decide. I am not aware of any in which I am concerned, that you need trouble yourself about at all.'

‘No, my lady, perhaps not. I did not say you were personally concerned in this, but it may interest you, notwithstanding. I have brought you a note from Mr. Lyndon.’

He handed it to her with a bow and a smile. High-spirited as she was, she could not conceal that she was startled, nor that her hands trembled, as she opened the scarcely legible scrawl—telling its own tale of the writer’s hurry and agitation.

‘MY DEAR ADELAIDE,—Spindler will explain to you the nature of the new misfortune, that has nearly stunned me for the moment, though I hope to pull through with honour, if I have time and support. He will agree to nothing till he has spoken to you, so I can only leave it in your hands, and *implore you to do what you can*. A month or six weeks will be *everything* to me. Arrange that if possible, and all will be well.

‘Yours, J. L.’

Mr. Spindler’s little eyes glittered as he watched her changing countenance, like the Lady Geraldine’s in *Christabel*.

‘Well, my lady?’ as soon as she had reached the last sentence, ‘when are you disposed to go into the matter—and where?’

‘Now, sir—wherever you please.’ He set the gate wide open immediately, and bowed again as she passed through, a courtesy lost upon Lady Adelaide, oppressed with the new and undefined burden laid on her energies, at the moment when they seemed to have already more than they could well bear. What this fresh misfortune could be, and why she was once more compelled to

submit to an interview with a man whom she had begun to fear as much as to despise, she dreaded to hear ; and yet the suspense was so intolerable as to make her indifferent to the fact, that she was actually entering his house, and being seated in his parlour. His officious parade of civilities were as much thrown away as if they had been addressed to the winds, and his opening speech was cut short by an earnest, but imperative entreaty, to tell her the worst at once.

It was soon told. The bank where Randolph's loan had been deposited, according to the direction of the Squire, had stopped payment the morning of the day he reached London ; so that instead of being relieved from difficulty, he was only doubly involved. The exultation with which the news was told, showed plainly, the money itself played but a secondary part in Mr. Spindler's estimation. He paused after giving his intelligence to allow her time to think it over ; but stood as near to her as he durst, balancing himself against the table, and every now and then biting the feather of a quill, and looking at her askance. No hunter who has ridden on the tracks of a noble quarry, mile after mile, ever approached within distance with a wilder throb of mingled hope and fear than he felt at that moment.

'Of course, my lady,' he went on, finding she remained silent, 'the Squire will do the right thing ; no one doubts *that*. If he sells every stick, if he gives up every shilling in his possession, he will pay everybody their due. No one would dream of disputing his honour for a moment. He tells me he only wants a little time, and then he expects to be all right ; well, he may be—he ought to know. I should say it was an

ugly state of affairs ; but he is the best judge, of course. At any rate, time he *must* have. Very well ; but what I want to know is, why should I be expected to give it him ?'

'I do not suppose, sir, Mr. Lyndon ever contemplated your doing so without making your own terms for the accommodation. I am no competent judge of such things, but I should have thought he could have given you sufficient security for your principal and interest, to make it a simple matter of investment.'

'You mean on this property, my lady? Very judicious on your part, and I might have thought so myself, had I not happened to find out, between ourselves, that my good friend has taken up money on it already, though he kept it all uncommonly snug and close. Ay, you may well look startled, my lady ; but it is a fact, and you, at least, ought to know it.'

She was indeed startled ; the peril seemed a great deal nearer than she had been able at first to realize.

'He has tried hard the last two years to pay this off, I find ; but he sunk a great deal of money in fly-away colonial speculations that I told him would never come to anything, and never have ; and his house has been in straits, and altogether he is in a dead-lock for the moment, and his fear is (*I* know) that a rumour may get abroad of his being in difficulty, which will alarm the holder of his mortgage. Do you understand me, my lady ?'

She bowed in silence ; her breathing grew short and quick.

'Well, now the thing is, what is to be done? I know how I have been treated among you ; your officious, well-meaning friend, Mr. Randolph, was any-

thing but civil—downright rude, in fact ; and you yourself, my lady, to do you justice, have taken as great pains to keep me at a distance as I should a blackamoor nigger in the States ; so you cannot expect me not to look to my own interests *first*, however I may wish to accommodate, can you ?

‘Certainly not, sir.’

He took a fresh bite at the quill, and another side glance. ‘Do you know any one who will be security for the amount ?’

She shook her head decidedly.

‘No friend or connexion of your own, who would come forward at a pinch ?’

‘None, sir, whatever.’

‘No relation—not very far off—eh ?’

She looked up quickly ; he shunned her eye, and began shaping the quill into a pen as he went on.

‘Everybody knows how rich the old Countess is ; and surely she would not refuse if she was properly asked.’

She tried hard to answer with temper, for the Squire’s sake.

‘You are labouring under a false impression, Mr. Spindler, entirely. I am quite sure Mr. Lyndon would be highly displeased if he thought such a proposal had even been hinted at.’

‘Indeed ? Well, it did not seem to strike him so when we talked it over. For her own credit’s sake, you know, she would not let you all be ruined without coming forward to help.’

‘Sir, I can listen to you no longer. I do not believe it is Mr. Lyndon’s wish, and you are presuming on my position in mentioning the subject.’

‘Of course, when your ladyship takes up that tone, there’s an end of the matter,’ said Mr. Spindler. ‘And so,’ he added, presently, carefully nibbling his pen on his thumb-nail, ‘you will do nothing to help your husband’s father in trouble?’

‘Mr. Lyndon knows how gladly I would help him if I could. I prove that by being here at this moment.’

‘I suppose your ladyship is aware how you all stand just now: I could put an execution into the Manor-house to-morrow, if I chose: and what would the Countess think of *that*, my lady?’

What, indeed? Adelaide shivered at the very thought. She saw it was but too true; whatever it might be later, for the moment they were at his mercy, as far as annoyance went; and though she could hardly believe he would really come to extremities with his old acquaintances, she was not sure to what lengths his spite against herself might carry him.

‘Come, my lady,’ he said, presently, with a change of tone, after enjoying for some time the distress plainly visible in her countenance. ‘I am not quite so hard-hearted, after all, as you may think. You never treated me as a friend, so you have no reason to suppose I should feel as one: but still I cannot bear to see a lady I so much respect and admire, made nervous and unhappy, if I can prevent it. Look here, my lady—Mr. Lyndon says six weeks will do for him: I will do more—I will give him two months for your sake, simply on your personal guarantee. You must just go through the form of putting your name to paper—I must have something to satisfy my conscience, in case it takes me to task for doing a foolish thing.’

‘Do I understand you clearly, sir, that you will lend

Mr. Lyndon the money for two months, if I engage for your being repaid at the end of the time?"

'Yes, my lady; and I do think a more liberal offer was never made; but for your sake——'

'One moment, sir. By such an arrangement I should be answerable for the sum, in case it was not in Mr. Lyndon's power to pay. But supposing I cannot pay it either, where will your security be?'

'Very true, my lady—I should be sorry any one knew I had even thought of so unbusiness-like an affair: but if I like to risk it, there will be time enough to settle some new arrangement when that day comes. I can't say I am much afraid.'

'Well, sir, I thank you for your polite intentions, and as soon as I have consulted Mr. Lyndon, and learned his wishes, I will let you know.'

'Oh, stop! I beg your pardon, Lady Adelaide, but that won't do. No consulting other people how to make the most of my being so soft-hearted, indeed! No, no. I am not sure that by the time your answer came, I should not repent of my bargain. It must be now, this minute—or not at all. I make you the offer out of good-will, as a slight tribute to yourself; if it is not worth your accepting, or you prefer applying to the Countess—who in that case must know it all, sooner or later—say so, and we shall understand each other, and part—as we parted last time.'

She looked steadily into his face, and in its sinister expression read all he left unspoken.

'Give me a pen, sir. You think you have me at your mercy, and you make your own terms. I have no choice left.'

He had everything ready, stamp and all, and laid

them before her in a minute, muttering something about keeping things by one, in case of a sudden emergency—it was always handy. ‘Just wait half a second, though, my lady—one little form besides. Here, Susan! Susan Chatterley! stop that piano, will you—and come down here?’

Miss Chatterley came running, somewhat flushed and flurried; she was trying over some new music Mr. Ousel had just brought, and had no idea her ladyship was in the house—dear! how could Cousin Abel be so forgetful as not to call her down? and she was just beginning a profuse outpouring of apology and inquiries, but her cousin cut her short. ‘Her ladyship is in a hurry, Susan; we are just doing a little business, and all we want you for is to be a witness. You see Lady Adelaide Lyndon put her signature—just there, my lady, if you please—exactly! and now you see her deliver this as her act and deed. Thank you. A mere form—nothing more; but men of business cannot help doing things formally—ha, ha, ha! Now, Susan, if you could persuade her ladyship to take anything——’

But Lady Adelaide, who felt suffocating for a breath of fresh air, put all their civilities by, and would take nothing but her departure. Mr. Spindler escorted her to the gate, and on bidding her good-bye, ventured to take her hand, and murmur over it some complimentary profession of disinterested regard; but she seemed neither to hear nor heed. She hurried home, afraid, like Macbeth, to think on what she had done, and feeling as if in an oppressive dream, from which she struggled in vain to wake.

Lucy ran into the hall to meet her—her face all one blank of bewilderment and dismay.

‘Oh, my dear, I am so thankful you are come at last! No end of troubles! What is to become of us all, I am sure I can’t say, except to go out as governesses, or distressed needlewomen, or I don’t know what. Penny will tell you all about it; but you must run now directly to your mother’s room; she asked for you some time ago, and I don’t know what is the matter, only that it must be something very serious, for she will not speak to any one else.’

Adelaide stood still for a moment, grasping the baluster for support, before ascending the stairs; and in that moment, as she bowed her head, breathed a prayer for courage. There was no time to collect her thoughts—whatever the fresh trial, it must be encountered, and as she was hastening upstairs, she found Emma coming to meet her, looking unusually anxious and grave. She told her Lady Delaunay had received a letter which had evidently given her a great shock, but as she had begged to be left alone, till her daughter came back, they had not ventured to intrude.

‘I have been listening, and can hear no sound of any kind. You had better take your things off first, and then go in as gently as you can; she may be asleep; and at any rate, to appear as if you were flurried or alarmed, would be the worst thing you could do.’

Lady Adelaide followed her advice; but when she opened the door she was very much startled by her mother’s attitude. She sat by the fire; her eyes fixed straight before her—the hand in which the letter was tightly held, hanging stiffly over the arm of the chair—her features pinched, and her body bent, but rigid and motionless. Alarmed, but without losing

her presence of mind, Adelaide approached, and placed herself where she could be seen, but the fixed eyeballs never moved; she addressed her by name—there was no answer, or sign of hearing. She knelt, and kissed the cold, damp hand, chafing it gently in her own, till it began to relax its hold, and the letter slipped from her fingers. The instant it did so, she gave a convulsed start and shiver, and seemed struggling for breath. Her daughter gave her restoratives, and watched with no small anxiety the gradual return of a more life-like tint to her cheek and lips, and a more natural expression to her features. What could have brought on this alarming attack she had not time then to conjecture, but her thankfulness when she saw it pass away is not to be told. Lady Delaunay sighed heavily several times, and her eyes closed as if exhausted; when they opened again, their stony glare was gone.

‘Who is here?—who is holding me?’ she asked, feebly, finding herself lying back in some one’s arms, whose face she could not see.

‘I am here, my dear mother—no one else.’

‘Is that Adelaide? Ah! poor child—poor child!’

The tone was so full of sorrowful pity, it nearly overcame Lady Adelaide’s self-command; but she knew the risk, and only ventured to press one long, gentle kiss on the white hair that rested on her bosom.

Again the faint voice murmured dreamily, as if unconscious of a listener.

‘So young as she was, why should she have kept it from me? Perhaps it was my fault—and yet I was never severe with her, never; and so young to deceive—sixteen—only sixteen!’

Her eyes closed heavily, and she gradually sank into

a quiet sleep in her daughter's arms. The position in which Lady Adelaide half-stood, half-leaned, was far from being an easy one, and the exertion of preserving it soon made the large drops of fatigue gather fast on her brow ; but the sleep was too precious to be endangered by the slightest movement, and she remained perfectly still, till the Countess awoke with a sudden start, and sat up—recollection and horror returning equally clear in a moment. The room had grown rather dark, except from the flicker of the firelight, and she did not distinguish at first who was attending on her. The tone in which she asked, 'Is that *you*, Adelaide?' was very different from the last ; different indeed from her usual manner, for it was sharp and quick.

'A light, a light, this moment !'

Adelaide obeyed as quickly as she could.

'The letter—I had a letter ; where is it ?'

She picked it up, and gave it to her, more terrified now than she had been yet ; though she hardly knew why, except that she had never seen her mother so unlike herself. Her face was in a glow, and her eyes sparkled with unnatural fire.

'Do you know what this means ?—do you know what you have done ?'

'No, dear mother.'

'Read it, then, and see ; you little knew, nor I, that it would lead to this. Oh, my son Delaunay—my own, my only one !'

And the pent-up agony let loose by the utterance of his name, gushed forth in a torrent of tears ; which, terrible as they were to see, gave such evident relief to her overcharged heart and brain, her daughter blessed

their flow. She durst not attempt to soothe or to caress; but she watched till the paroxysm was past, unable till then even to fix her attention on the letter that was to explain its cause.

The letter itself was not long. It was from Lord Delaunay, written in evident haste; explaining first, in a few words, that he had arranged the business in which his mother took so much interest, according to her wishes, having but one wish in such matters, to please her in everything. Then he went on to tell her, what his sister's eyes could hardly believe they read aright—when she found Randolph accused of wronging his trust, of stealing her young affections, of obtaining such an influence over her as nothing but the vigilance of one true and faithful friend could have counteracted—accused, further, of still cherishing those ambitious views of which he had proved himself so unworthy—of making strenuous, though artfully concealed efforts to at once regain his hold upon herself, and establish a footing in the family—holding out to her as a lure, the offer of his assistance in her restoration. All this, stated in the plain, terse language of firm conviction, that left no room for comment or reply, and given as a reason for what had happened—and for what might happen yet.

'You may suppose,' the letter went on, 'I did not enter into particulars with the gentleman; I quietly gave him to understand I knew his antecedents, and expected he would take a plain hint to desist from any further intercourse with any member of my family. He resented this; and, in short, we parted on terms that can, I should imagine, lead but to one result. At least, he is at liberty to bring on that result as soon as

he pleases. I have done my duty, and am prepared to take the consequences. Could I but have your blessing, I should be happier, but I rely on your approval of my conduct, as being what you would expect from my father's son. If anything unfortunate should occur, my friend Mr. Hope has charge of my papers, and will tell you everything. I do not myself anticipate evil ; I am cooler in danger than out of it ; and if things do come to extremities, shall probably feel much less disturbed than I do now in naming it to you. One thing more ; it lies heavy at my heart, and may be my last request. Try and see poor Adelaide ; I fear I have been a careless, negligent brother to her, and that thought weighs me down ; see her, and hear what she has to say—and for my sake——'

With that unfinished prayer the letter broke off—unsigned, undated, it had evidently been left, from some interruption, and sent—who could tell why ?

Lady Adelaide durst not grapple with that question ; the horror she had seen in her mother's face was now struggling in her own, as she looked up from that appalling blank page with eyes that seemed stiffening as they dilated, and white lips that could not articulate a word. But by this time Lady Delaunay had partially recovered herself, and her mind was regaining its firmness. 'We must not allow ourselves to dwell on the worst,' she said ; 'infinite mercy, in which is all my trust, may have averted the visitation, and kept him from the peril and the sin. A few hours must end our suspense, and we must school our hearts to bear——' She clasped her hands upon her brow for a moment, and then the rush of bitter thoughts could be suppressed no more.

‘What have I ever done to you, Adelaide, that I never gained your confidence, was never trusted with the secrets of your heart? I trusted *you*—I never forced confessions, or exacted an account of all you did and felt, because I relied on your openness and truth;—what was it that perverted your once frank nature, and made you a coward and a dissimulator before you were a woman? Do you know what you have done *now*?—do you realize the result of concealing from me *then* your position with Mr. Randolph, and the circumstances of your separation? Yes, you may well tremble, and blush; I know you little thought it would come to this; but there never yet was a secret deceit that did not bring its punishment in time. Oh, learn by this to be true, before it is too late! I knew nothing of this man’s character but what was in his favour; his whole bearing and conversation increased my good opinion; I even allowed him a freedom of speech that I should indeed have resented, had I known it was all part of a train of manœuvres, in which I was made the tool of his private designs—I would fain hope, not of *yours*. It was at my request, to relieve me of responsibility, he went after your brother; I remember now that Charlotte seemed uneasy about it—why did she not speak out, if she knew? Was it that she was pledged to silence, or is *she* too leagued with you all to deceive and betray me, and break my heart? No, Adelaide, do not cover your face—let me read it; hide not its shame; for in that shame which speaks of repentance I can alone hope to find strength to pardon you, if indeed you have helped to bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave!’

‘Mother—mother! have mercy! I can bear no more. It is not as you suppose; I am not what you think, nor Mr. Randolph either. In his behalf, at least, I *must* speak—I *must* be heard. By all that is sacred, you wrong him—Delaunay wrongs him; in everything I ever knew or heard of him, he acted as a man of honour, and does so still. Who has poisoned my brother’s mind I cannot tell, I dare not even guess; I only know he is innocent, and so am I! My early fault of reserve towards you is indeed heavily punished; but spare me these cruel words till you know all! There is much that you ought to know—that you should have known before, if I could but have told it to you, and which would have prevented *this*—that I dare not think of, and can never face and live! Oh, mother,’ she continued, as her strength failing her at last, she sank on the ground by her chair, and looked despairingly up in her face, ‘is it a sin to wish that Heavenly mercy would accept *my* life—useless and unloved as I am—instead of one of those perilled so awfully in my name, and whose blood will be laid on *me*?’

The hollow tone of agony in which this was said brought her mother’s arm round her; and she felt herself drawn gently nearer, till her head rested on the Countess’s knee.

‘There is but one thing that can support us now,’ she said, solemnly. ‘Let us pray.’

Then in her feeble, broken accents, which gained steadiness as she went on, she slowly repeated those two collects from the Litany, in which one implores assistance for the prayers made in troubles and adversities, from the merciful Father who despiseth not the

sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as be sorrowful :—and the other beseeches Him mercifully to look on His children's infirmities, and for the glory of His name to turn from them all those evils that they have most righteously deserved.

Never were those time-honoured words fraught with deeper meaning, or uttered with more intensity of desire ; and an answer seemed given even as they rose, in the comparative calm that stole over their troubled spirits. With all Adelaide's weariness and grief, there was a sense of protection and comfort in resting as she did her head against her mother, with her mother's hand held fast in hers, so unutterably precious, and so unexpectedly vouchsafed, that even then she blessed God for His mercy, and felt she could trust Him for more. Neither of them would have believed, had it been told them, how soon they would both have found strength to take the more hopeful view of what they dreaded. After a silence that neither seemed willing to break, Lady Delaunay spoke again.

' As it is impossible to say how suddenly we may be called upon to act, Adelaide, whatever you feel I ought to know, I am ready to hear. Tell me, if you can, everything. Half information is in such cases worse than none.'

And Adelaide did tell her everything that she could, intending, at first, to confine herself to what was necessary for the justification of Maurice Randolph ; but drawn on by her mother's questions, and her own craving for the relief of confession, to subjects on which she had not thought to speak ; very trying, sometimes humiliating, but less so at that moment and in that

attitude than in any other. All she had a right to tell, she told—much more than she meant, or was aware of telling, or than Lady Delaunay had expected; and little did she imagine what an additional weight of anguish she was laying on her attentive and patient listener.

It is often remarked that troubles never come alone; but not as often, that from the fact of their coming together, each individual sorrow is the less keenly felt. Perhaps nothing could so have distracted Lady Delaunay's thoughts from the shock of her son's letter, as the discovery that she had been mistaken in her niece. Not that she knew all, or half—or that she was disposed to condemn her unheard, in what she did know—but the discrepancies between her statements and those to which she now listened, given with all the simple earnestness of truth—without an attempt to palliate her own faults or lay them on others, but merely to relate facts as they occurred—were glaring enough to startle a much less observant judge. Again and again she questioned Adelaide, sometimes wringing answers that she would fain have withheld—in half expectation that some contradiction might appear; but the more circumstantial became her narrative, the more palpable its truth; and a sickness of heart, such as only those can know who have trusted and been deceived, crept over Lady Delaunay, that sensibly influenced her manner before she was aware. The barrier of proud reserve between herself and her daughter, which had first given way as fellowship in suffering drew them together, yielded more and more, as the feeling grew stronger that *this* might soon be all that was left her in the world. Her severity of purpose seemed for the time forgotten; she

permitted her attendance through the evening (which their friends prudently left uninterrupted) without any of her former freezing politeness ; and melancholy as was the conversation, it was at least unembittered by the words and looks that had been a harder trial than grief. Adelaide felt the change acutely ; her resolution had been knit up to endure harshness with submission, but the strangeness of the milder mood unstrung her nerves, and when, as she paused to recover from the agitation of painful reminiscences, she felt her mother's hand stroking her hair, and remembered how long and wearily she had pined for that touch in vain, a gush of irrepressible bitterness burst from her unawares.

‘ Oh, why, why, since you forbade me to write to you, would you never, in all those years, send me one answer to all my messages, all my entreaties, but for one word ? Why would you not see me when I came back from India, and only wanted to know your wishes, that I might fulfil them ? Why would you never believe I was sincere in my longing for reconciliation and forgiveness ? If I could but have written, as I yearned to do, but would not disobey your command, you could not have thought me hardened so long ; not even from my last letter, written in the excitement of momentary passion, and regretted directly afterwards, and ever since—the rather, that I could not believe you meant the message you sent. Oh, my mother!’ she continued, pressing her hand in both hers, ‘ tell me you regretted it—tell me you did not intend to insult him and me by lowering him in my eyes—that you did not mean to mock me with the semblance of kindness, while you were wounding my feelings, and cutting me to the heart—tell me but this, and I will thank and bless you

for removing one of my bitterest sorrows—that of having, by my wilfulness and disobedience, warped your noble nature to commit a wrong!’

Lady Delaunay’s face darkened, though there was more sorrow in it than anger.

‘Child, child, how little you have ever understood your own happiness! I would gladly, if I could, forget that period—forget how my last effort to save you from what I foresaw was treated as an insulting interference. Why do you remind me of it now? Is it to show me that, after all, you are in one respect less changed than I had begun to hope? Perhaps you do wisely; I have unintentionally wounded you once, and I might do it again.’

‘Oh, do not say so!’

‘Is it not the fact, then, that even now you have not told me all?’

The painful recollection of what had that day occurred, checked the eager reply Lady Adelaide was just going to make. Her eyes drooped beneath her mother’s penetrating look, and the consciousness that she was showing embarrassment made her falter, as if with guilt.

‘All that relates only to myself—all I am at liberty to tell—but where others are concerned——’

‘Yes, Adelaide, I quite understand. I ask no more. When it is too late, you will see your mistake, and think differently of my motives. I do not wish to discuss the point; I have not strength for it now. Do not, however, misunderstand me,’ she added, after a pause, seeing the distress Adelaide could not conceal, ‘it is not that I doubt your truth in what you *have* told me. I rely on that unhesitatingly; but there is some mystery at the bottom of the whole proceeding which I cannot now

solve ; all is dark around me and within me. We are all blind, and He leads us on, how and whither, we know not—sometimes, not till the very end of our course—but He knows, and His light is ready, to shine in His own good time. Well for those who can meet that light, and are permitted to repair their errors before it be too late. Yes,’ she repeated, mournfully, ‘it is very dark about me now, and I am weary, weary !—but I must not sink, for my work is not yet done. If I only knew—Adelaide ! what was that ?’

It was only Penelope knocking at the door, and blandly inquiring after the Countess’s health ; so blandly, indeed, that it struck them both there was something else underneath. Each saw the same impression reflected in the face of the other. ‘Go, Adelaide,’ said Lady Delaunay, trembling ; ‘see what it is, and bring me word—directly !’

Lady Adelaide moved to the door, almost by instinct ; for she felt too dizzy to see it. Penelope retreated into the passage, beckoning her to follow ; Emma was there, and by her stood a tall, gray-haired clergyman, with a frank, energetic countenance, which did not seem quite that of a stranger—though where and when she had seen it, she could not recal. One glance at their faces confirmed her vague suspicion, but terror deprived her of voice or motion, and she could only clasp her hands in mute entreaty. The new comer stepped instantly forwards, with a manner full of earnest and respectful kindness. ‘I must not expect Lady Adelaide Lyndon to remember me, though I cannot be mistaken in her. Forgive this intrusion, but I am come down express, fearing Lady Delaunay might see the paper and be startled—before—’

‘Come back, Adelaide!’ called the voice within.

Adelaide gasped for breath, and looked piteously at Mr. Powys, whose eyes glistened compassionately, though he hesitated what to do. But the Countess had heard his voice, and her own sounded strangely and calm as she again called to her daughter.

‘Bring him in, Adelaide, directly!’

The command could not be disobeyed, and as her eyes fell on Adelaide’s pallid features, and then on those of her companion, flushed with eagerness and haste, a faint colour tinted her cheeks—the glow of steadfast resolution, that was almost heroic.

‘I know why he has come; I know he would not let any one break it to me but himself. Come to me, my daughter, and we will hear our sentence together. Give me your hand: now, help me to say and feel, however dreadful the blow—not our will, but *His* be done!’

CHAPTER XII.

Man the life-boat!

RUSSELL.

IN an upper room of a half-finished hotel, in a small half-finished French watering-place, sat, one stormy evening, whose winds and breakers were but in too exact harmony with his own tempest-tossed spirit, a sad and solitary man: so sad, that nothing but solitude was endurable. The pride of manliness could never have borne that any eye should witness the anguish that brought the big drops to his brow, as he stooped over the table before him, and buried his head in his hands, revolving the many bitter thoughts that crowded through his brain, and endeavoured to face the future that glared upon him through the gloom of the present. Never did a stern and resentful aspect veil a deeper sense of wretchedness, than did that of Maurice Randolph, when he left Lord Delaunay's presence, bearing on his broad front the stigma of a deliberate insult; a stain cast upon his honour—his word rejected—his appeal disregarded—his friendship flung back as a worthless mockery. Pride had supported him while under the eyes of men, but proved a miserable comforter when alone. What could pride do for him now,

but goad him with the maddening thought, that for insult and wrong like this there was but one expiation? What could it do for him when the next, no less maddening, rose to overwhelm his spirit, that such an expiation, let it end as it might, must shut him out from that one struggling hope, shining still afar like the light on the distant harbour, through the darkness and the spray. Once lift his hand against her brother, and what would ever unlock to its touch that coveted treasure-house—the heart of Adelaide Lyndon?

And if he sat down quietly under the scorn and the obloquy—an alternative that no man could face without a sense of despair—what would she think of him? How could he hold up his head in the world—he, who had gone through it so proudly, in the conscious freedom of strength and self-reliance—how could he allow his honour to be held cheap, and his offered hand a degradation, and not feel that he was unworthy to be called a man? Sorrow met him either way; and the struggle between the two had been wringing his heart till it was nearly exhausted in the strife; and the only relief he could find was in pouring it forth in a long letter to his friend the Rector of Cannymoor: such a letter as a man will write *once*, it may be, in his life—when every barrier is broken down by the tide of grief, and all his strength is such conscious weakness, that the cry for human help and sympathy will make itself heard, even where it is known to be in vain. As he wrote, his bitterness took a softer tone; when he named Lady Adelaide, it was with a yearning and passionate tenderness, which he had never expressed yet to any living being: and then, as if he could not restrain himself, he gave vent to all his self-reproach for his long miscon-

ception of her character—the revenge he had cherished and followed, first in the shape of unjust severity, then in the more subtle form of benefits—all merged since in that longing to serve and befriend her, which had driven him from her presence, and bound him to this enterprise ; luring him on with the flattering hope, that for good service done, she might be induced to pardon—and then to hear him !

‘ Even as I name her,’ he went on, ‘ her image rises before me—that sad, suffering, beautiful face, as I saw it last, when her noble nature could bear no more the torture laid upon it—those dark eyes full of tears—tears that I helped to make her shed—haunt me like a remorse. Oh, that my blood—so I might but offer it guiltlessly—could buy her back that lightness of heart that she had when I knew her first ! But what is the use of my writing like this ? Dear friend, true friend, truth-teller and truth-lover, to you I may confess, without fear or shame, what I feel now to have been my error all along. I must needs do more than others—I must needs be first everywhere. What I fancied to be generosity, or charity, or manly resentment, or returning good for evil ; or last—and this the most specious of all—what was to enable me to deserve a prize of unutterable value ; the zeal, the skill, the persuasive power that were to work such wonders—fool that I was !—all were but so many forms of pride and self-sufficiency, in which I thought myself above my fellow-men. And now I feel how helpless I am ; the voice of God within me warns me to forbear—the voices of men without goad me to go on. Whichever I choose, I am humbled in the dust ; in the one case by the scorn of others—in the other by my own.

‘It is such a relief to tell you this, I cannot refrain. Your kind heart will suffer in reading what *I* dare not read ; if I paused to do so, I should not send it. When you have read, pray for me ; long before you receive it my fate will be decided, and whatever it may be, nothing but death will make me cease to love and revere you. Should anything happen to me, do me one service ; tell Lady Adelaide that from my soul I entreat her pardon for all my unintentional wrong ; and that till this moment I never knew how deeply, dearly, devotedly I loved her.’

He could go no further. As he truly said, he durst not pause to read what he had written. He pressed his lips on Adelaide’s name, sealed the letter in haste, and sent it down to be posted. And it was after this that he sat, as we have described him—listening to the wild roar of the waves, and brooding over what had happened, and must happen next.

‘Oh that there were but some way pointed out to me by which I might escape—some fiery path of peril or of hardship that might save my honour and my conscience, even at the cost of my life ! Is there sin in such a prayer in such an extremity as mine ?’

There was a step in the passage, a hand on the key, and the next moment a youth, in the undress of a French subaltern, entered with the freedom of acknowledged intimacy, and laid his hand affectionately on his shoulder.

‘Maurice, my friend, what is it ?’

Randolph looked up with a start, somewhat impatiently ; but Jules Armand was privileged, for he was the son of an old friend, and Maurice had just been serving him ; his delay in Paris, in fact, had been

caused by his exertions to get him out of the hands of some British sharpers. So he turned the question abruptly, by asking what he had been doing with himself ever since the *table d'hôte*.

'I have been improving my intellectual faculties, Maurice.'

'Not before they wanted it, I can answer for that.'

'Then you ought to encourage a beginner, instead of growling under your moustache like the surly British lion that you are. See, I have been studying the principles of navigation over that marvellous new invention, the life-boat, which those two military *compatriotes* of yours have been good enough to bring over here, as a model for our Government. *Merci!* Are they modest, these English? No offence to you, Maurice, who are a cosmopolite—fellow-countryman of all the globe; but I enrage to see those two warriors, not content with the whole of their precious island to exhibit the wonders of their inventive genius, coming here to teach *us* how to win the government prize! It is a little too strong, for example!'

'What is she like?' asked Randolph, indifferently.

'Like? It is the drollest affair—red as the coats of your heroes at Burgos, *mon chère*, and as to the philosophical principle, it is to save lives *par raison démonstrative*; no more possible to sink than an empty bottle. They undertake to carry a man, besides the crew, for every foot of length, and offer a reward to any one clever enough to swamp them; in short, to hear those gentlemen talk, it is a boat *comme il y'en a point*; and I have five bets against anything ever being saved by it better than a ship's monkey!'

'Five bets! you incorrigible good-for-nothing!

'Whom have you been betting with, and what business had you to bet at all?'

'*Allons!* was I to hear all those valiant islanders—for there are a dozen of them here, come over from Havre on purpose—challenging each other, and everybody else, and stand by dumb, as if France had never seen a boat before, or could not build fifty better than that boiled lobster? Eh, Maurice? I have not broken my word to you; I was not gambling; it was only a little sport, *à l'Anglaise*. They were all doing it; every man had a fault to find, and yet was ready to fight anybody who presumed to criticise the national invention. Your people are like that, always. That blond milord you called upon, was looking on with his friend, the handsome captain, the one laying down maxims of profound philosophy, and the other yawning; how he does yawn, that hero! It is infectious to look at him. Possibly the maritime experience of milord might be oppressive; *moi qui vous parle*, I have yawned myself, when M. le Colonel, who served under le Duc de Dalmatie, in Spain, grew too eloquent about the Pyrenees, and the great victory at Toulouse. Maurice, you look melancholy; what can I do for you?'

'Nothing, but be quiet, and let me alone.'

'*Peste!* that is amiable, it must be confessed. I tell you everything, even to my worst follies, and you call me all the names a Mentor is privileged to use for the improvement of his pupil; and if I am in a scrape, help me out. You are vexed with something in your turn, and tell *me* nothing; so even if you have, by good luck, been a little foolish too, I have not the satisfaction of either serving or tormenting you.'

'There, there, my dear boy, you know how to do

one, if not the other. It is not worth while to annoy one's friends every time one is out of humour. Talk of something else, if you must talk.'

'Of course we must talk—I should think so! But if you have *les vapeurs*, Maurice, I think there will be a little drollery going on to-morrow, which ought to interest you, as he is of your *connaissance*; only you English do take everything so phlegmatically——'

'It is well we can, when we have to deal with such remorseless chatterers as you are. What is it to me whether people amuse themselves, or whether they let it alone?'

'True; you only stand on your eyrie, and look down with eagle glance on our vanities, and when the rascality of the lower earth grows too strong for your luckless friends, swoop down to avenge and deliver. That is your way of taking pleasure, Maurice. And perhaps milord has told you all, and it is a secret of honour. In that case I have heard nothing, and know nothing.'

'What are you talking about? Anything you have been allowed to hear can be no secret, I will answer for it.'

'Well, then, I heard him tell his yawning friend—who actually shut his mouth unexpectedly with surprise—that if some one unnamed resented his language, he knew his duty; he believed him to be a man of courage and good family, and therefore he had made up his mind to the consequences. And his friend said very coolly in reply, that it was well he did, for those sort of fellows were always dead shots. *Hein*, Maurice? There can be but one meaning to that? I know enough of your beautiful language to be quite sure of

the fact; and enough of the human physiognomy to be sure now you knew something of this before.'

'I knew he had insulted one man,' said Randolph, coldly, 'that was all.'

'Well, and if he is a man of courage, what can he do but fight him? I do not know what you think in England of such things—they say you are grown scrupulous of late years—but if it was the dearest friend I had in the world, I would rather fight him myself than that he should be slow in such a matter.'

'You would, Jules, would you?'

'Yes, that I would. Do you think I would call a man my friend who could not guard his own honour? Eh, Maurice? What is the matter now?'

'I am stifled in this room. I must have air. I shall go out.'

'At your service; a lovely evening for a romantic ramble. I hope you have no loose teeth in your head, for the wind will send them all down your throat.'

'Hark! what was that? Did you hear anything?'

'Only the rattling of all the windows in the hotel. What was it?'

'Hush; put out the candles—will you?'

Jules obeyed, and Randolph flung open the window to listen.

'I am sure of it—there again! signals of distress. Come and try if your young ears can tell in what direction.'

'My young eyes can, at any rate. Do you see yonder—that light? It grows redder—stronger—look! It is a ship on fire, no doubt of it.'

Randolph looked steadily, and then closed the window.

‘Jules, how often have you been at sea?’ he asked, while collecting the papers that had been blown about the table.

‘Never but once—bah!’

His face as he relighted the candle just extinguished, told volumes of what that ‘once’ had been.

‘How often have you handled an oar?’

‘Never.’

‘So I supposed; then there is not much for you to do in active service just yet, but you can help me notwithstanding. Ask no questions, but attend to what I say. If anything should happen to me, there is the address of the friend in London to whom you are to send, that is all. Now come along after this wonderful life-boat. We will help her win the prize, let your national vanity kick against it as much as you will.’

‘Thou art a brave fellow, Maurice—but—*ah ça!* my bets! my bets! Thou wilt ruin me!’

The news of a ship in distress had already spread through the place, and residents and visitors, gentlemen and fishermen, were collecting round the English model—the only life-boat to be had. The owners, a Mr. Shirley and his son, both old acquaintances of Captain Chester’s, were already hard at work, preparing for the expedition, and selecting a crew (their own best hands being absent holiday-making) from the volunteers that offered themselves. A dozen voices were in eager discussion when Randolph and Jules came up; the French boatmen were unanimous that no boat could escape being swamped in such a wind and sea, and as to that British invention, they didn’t believe in it a bit. They knew the coast, and they

knew the weather, and it would be just throwing lives away. The Shirleys, father and son, exulting in the perfections of their beloved model, small as she was compared with what they meant to build another year on the same principle, were in the highest spirits and confidence; rules that held good with other boats, were not applicable to the *Defiance*; if she were only sufficiently manned, they would undertake to fetch every soul on board; she could not be overset, and she could not be sunk; if the water got in one way, it got out as fast another; and such a wind, and such an opportunity, were all they had asked of destiny. Who would join them? Several pressed forwards, and Mr. Shirley's quick eye was prompt in its selection, without reference to anything but serviceable qualities.

'Eight oars—Edgar, one—Ben Staines, two—Abrahams, three—what, Jacques Potel, with the red nightcap, you ready to risk your life in the new invention after all? Well done, *mon brave*; you shall be the fourth. Chester, come—I have seen you pull; this is just the fun for you—it will be a charity to give you something to keep you awake.'

'My dear Shirley, you are a very pleasant, agreeable, witty fellow, and I admire your jokes amazingly, but even a joke may go too far; and you don't pretend that you are really carrying yours out to the extent of putting us innocent creatures into this thing, do you? We shall all be pickled what's-his-name in five minutes—we shall, upon my honour. Oh no, I have no objection. I would as soon be pickled as not; it is all the same. You don't happen to have such a thing as an oilskin cap, do you? for the salt water is no joke when it gets into your hair, I can tell you that.'

Mr. Shirley had not waited for the end of this speech ; he was engaging another hand, and had filled all vacancies but two—one of these was now claimed by Lord Delaunay, who had, as usual, arrived after every one else.

‘You need not look as if you doubted my strength,’ he said, seeing a demur arise ; ‘for I tell you honestly, go I will. I hold my life as cheaply as any of you.’

‘So do I!’ shouted Jules Armand, pressing forwards ; ‘a brave man can always die.’

‘But he cannot always row,’ said a voice, and Randolph’s inexorable arm pulled him back. ‘This is no work for lads like you. Be quiet, Jules, or I shall knock you down. There, God bless you ! there may be plenty for you to do yet if you have patience ; but this place belongs to me.’

A glance at the powerful frame and determined face made the master only too glad to admit such a hand. Lord Delaunay, who had turned at the sound of his voice, gave him one keen, impressive look, and a grave salute passed on either side, but not a word. It was no time for talking ; each man knew there was serious work before him, and the winds and waves soon let no voices be heard but their own.

Manfully they pulled through the seething breakers, and gallantly the little *Defiance* responded to the boasting of her master, as sea after sea broke over her, and yet she neither filled nor over-balanced. Even in the tumult and exertion, Mr. Shirley could not resist pointing this out to his crew, whose behaviour, indeed, was quite worthy of their craft. The resolution of the amateurs made them equal to the old hands in energy ; Randolph’s iron muscles, and the skill, which in Lord

Delaunay's case supplied the place of strength, were valuable assistants to their progress; and the sight of the burning vessel, as they advanced, stung them to fresh efforts, lest, after all, they should come too late.

It was a large transport steamer, with troops on board—some of them with their wives and children; and their shouts and cries, as the boat drew near, were fearful. The dense struggling mass, clustered at the side, showed what a rush there would be the moment there was a chance. There seemed to be no one in command—all was confusion and riot.

'Our pickling becomes a pleasing certainty,' said Captain Chester to his next neighbour; 'they will swamp us in a moment.'

'The *Defiance* cannot be swamped,' was the cool reply of Edgar Shirley; 'but they may drown themselves, if not us. Here, Potel,' he said in French; 'hail the steamer, and tell them if they will not be orderly and patient, we will not come within their reach.'

The boatman put his brown hands to his mouth, and delivered a volley of pungent remonstrance, which was received with yells of rage. Some grew so excited they jumped overboard, and the panic and fury seemed to be increasing so fearfully, Mr. Shirley resolved to risk it, and the *Defiance* dashed alongside; the next moment there came a rush, and a dozen men leaped into her, making her rock and reel again, but without destroying her equilibrium. Several others missed their spring, and fell headlong into the waves; these were rescued with difficulty, and the life-boat having as many as she could hold, prepared to pull off again. At this sight, the despair on board the steamer became

terrific ; for the terror lest the fire should gain ground before the ark of safety could return, was more than their excited brains could contemplate. What fearful catastrophe might have occurred, it were hard to tell ; but Lord Delaunay suddenly springing from his seat, caught a rope that hung over the vessel's side, and climbing up with yachtsman-like agility, stood in the midst of the crowd. His friends below saw him vehemently gesticulating, arguing, menacing from man to man in fluent, energetic French ; he appealed to the soldiers, to show themselves worthy of their name, of their nation, of their glory, of the memory of the great Napoleon ; and not by these unmanly, unsoldierly terrors, throw away at once their chance of life, and the honour that only made life valuable. He, an Englishman, had come on board to share their fate, whatever it might be, and would not leave the vessel while a man remained in it ; and he was sure such brave men would do their utmost to help him keep order, and save the weakest first.

In the noise and confusion, much that he said was lost ; but the slight form and fair face, with the commanding gestures, and glittering eyes, in which the spirit of his mother was beaming forth, struck them with respect and admiration. Ashamed of their disorder, they fell back, and after a little while, were ready to obey every injunction given them. The commanding officer of the detachment, with the captain of the steamer, and several seamen, had been washed overboard and drowned in a vain attempt to lower a boat ; they had lost one of their paddles, and all attempts to check the progress of the fire proving futile, it is no wonder they had begun to despair. Now that

hope had revived, all were glad to obey orders; and such means as could be resorted to were adopted at once, so as to give them every chance. Lord Delaunay singled out a little drummer, whom he had observed maintaining his coolness through all the tumult, and placing him by his side, said, 'I know *you* will do your duty. Keep by me, and beat your drum as I bid you.'

The brave little fellow promised he would, and kept his word.

It was a tremendous night, and a tremendous struggle. Pull as the rowers might, and did, every man knew that in the state the steamer was in, there was no saying whether those left behind might not perish before they could return. There was one in the *Defiance* to whom this gave a strength that seemed superhuman. One signal had he exchanged with the gallant form, conspicuous in the red fire-light, as it stood cheering the sinking hearts around by sheer coolness and self-possession; and that signal Lord Delaunay had read as if it had been written, 'If I live, I will come back.'

And they did come back—again, and yet again—and as the drummer beat at the Englishman's order, the soldiers put the women and children on board first, and then stepped in themselves, quietly and almost in silence. The peril increased every moment; the life-boat was crowded as much as even her wonderful buoyancy could bear, and still there were three looking over the side, with the flames gaining on them fast—an old seaman, the gallant little drummer, and Lord Delaunay.

'Can you take one more—only one?'

'Yes, my lord,' returned a voice, and in a few moments Randolph had made his way up to the deck. 'There is room for one, Lord Delaunay.' The Earl

shook his head. 'But not for me. Come, *mon camarade*, descend, quick—and take the boy with you—there must be room for his small body.' The sailor hesitated. Lord Delaunay stamped imperatively. 'You dare to disobey? Descend!'

The next moment he and Randolph were standing alone. The little drummer, as he looked back, burst out crying. 'How long can you hold out?' shouted Mr. Shirley.

'While life lasts. Pull off, pull off,' said the Earl, waving his hand, 'and God bless you all—you will do your best to save us; I know that.'

There were those afterwards, in describing the scene of that night, who said that it was terrible to see the excitement of the English when they had left those two in that peril: wearied as they were, almost to exhaustion, with the efforts they had already made, their strokes came feebler and slower, but not a man dreamed of giving in, or resigning his post to another: without a word being exchanged, it was a fixed resolve in every heart to save them if it was in human power; and as soon as the last man from the steamer was landed, they pulled off again.

Alas! before they had gone far, a wilder and fiercer blaze of light announced the destruction of the vessel: no one could stand in her now, and live.

Pull lustily now, gallant oarsmen, and warily withal, or never more will you or England see those two brave men again! Up with the lantern—ready with the rope—shout, with what little breath and lungs you have left, to keep up the courage of the swimmers, if yet they exist to see or hear! Yes—in that red glare that shot up so opportunely, was seen a dark object strug-

gling—it is one of them, clinging to a spar—thank God! Steadily old Shirley steers towards the spot: Captain Chester, his nonchalance by this time thoroughly soaked out of him, stands erect, and poises the rope ready to cast. ‘Hold on! hold on there! Now! one stroke forward!’ And well it is flung, and tightly it is grasped with the strength of despair; and the light of the lantern flashes on the face of Maurice Randolph, supporting himself and the insensible form of Lord Delaunay, by the help of the floating spar.

It was no easy task in that raging sea to lift in the Earl, but Randolph held him up with indomitable resolution, and after two or three ineffectual attempts, he was grasped by sturdy hands and hauled in. ‘So far, so good—now for the other!’

Where was he?

Gone. In that moment, as his hold of his charge relaxed, he lost rope, spar, and consciousness, and disappeared.

‘Men!’ shouted the master, ‘if we lose this gallant fellow, I break up the *Defiance* the moment we land. Back oars! he is gone under her. Abrahams, take the helm. Give me the rope!’

He was just preparing for a plunge: his son stopped him in time. ‘Hold hard, hold hard, sir! he is up again! there! one pull, and I’ll have him yet!’

The thick dark hair was just within reach: the young Englishman darted half over the side, and clutched it tightly, happier than if it had been a Koh-i-noor: several eager hands were helping in a moment, and among them they laid him, half dead, by the side of the partially recovered Earl.

The cheers and shouts of welcome that greeted

their landing were not to be forgotten by those who heard. The *Defiance* had saved her timbers—or rather, her tubes—and won her prize into the bargain.

As may be supposed, the neighbourhood rang with this exploit; and there was no small amount of hustling undergone at the hands of officials by those who ought to have done it themselves, and not have left the work of deliverance to the chance heroism of visitors. With all that, however, we have little to do. On the second morning after it happened, several people were collected on the quay at Havre, waiting to go on board the little steamer bound to Trouville—now become an object of curiosity, as the scene of this much-talked-of adventure. Among them was an English traveller, carpet bag in hand, whose quiet, keen face, as he stood hemmed in by his eager neighbours, betrayed evident symptoms of the interest he took in the conversation, that could not but fall on his ears, whether he would or not.

‘When I tell you,’ vociferated one voice in particular, to a dissentient companion, ‘that I saw Jules myself, not an hour ago, and he told me all! Ask him a little; he was there; he knows the whole history; he *raffoles* of one of those Englishmen, a heart of gold, a second “Sir Edward Klerbbs,” such as Méry drew; a man to found a town in the centre of an Indian jungle *à lui seul*. He has his reasons, this good Jules; if he has been playing Lorédan, he has found his profit in it, you will see.’

‘But what had Jules to do in that *galère*? I thought he was on duty at Paris.’

‘I asked him that, but he would not stop to tell. His whole soul was full of *ce cher Maurice*, who seems

likely to leave his heroic relics for the Naiads of Trouville to weep over, in return for his devotion.'

There was a laugh, and a sudden movement in the crowd, caused by the signal to go on board. The English traveller going with the stream, found himself on the deck between the two companions, who were still discussing the same subject.

'It is droll how these English precipitate themselves into adventure. It makes a distraction from their constitutional *ennui*, no doubt. But some of these are badly hurt, and as our science is not good enough for Britannic bruises, Jules says they want a surgeon over from London. He was here in hopes of meeting with one.'

'With all my heart. For the rest, an Englishman more or less in the world, the loss is not considerable. Here comes Jules.'

As the words were uttered, young Armand came racing down the quay, and bounded on board, just as the rope was cast off. He was assailed unsparingly with questions, more or less ironical, which he took with good-humour at first, but presently waxed irate.

'Gentlemen, I have but one word to say on this matter. He of whom you speak is my friend. I owe him more than my life, and I love him better.' And with that he turned briskly, and walked to the other side of the boat, where the quiet English stranger presently joined him.

'I beg your pardon, sir,' said the latter, politely, 'but I am anxious to know if your friend whom you speak of as Maurice, can be the same as mine. Is his name Randolph?'

'*Vraiment oui*, and yours, sir?'

‘Lyndon.’ The youth caught him by both hands, and shook him warmly. ‘The friend I have been writing to for him! Oh, you are indeed welcome, sir! A friend of Maurice must be mine too. When did you arrive?’

‘Last night, or rather this morning, after the most frightful passage I ever had in my life. We were nearly lost ourselves in that gale, but I little imagined what was going on here.’

‘Who could? What a night it was! I shall never forget it—never!’ And out he poured the tale of the wreck, as far as he knew it—and his fears of what might be the result.

‘I was left on the shore; I could not row, but I suffered more deaths than they braved. When the last cargo arrived without Maurice, and it was all they could do to bring what they had, and I heard he had given up his place to another, and gone to share the fate of his countryman on board, I could have wept tears of blood. I envied those men who rushed panting back to save him. I was up to the waist in water to help them when they returned; and when I saw him, I thought he was dead. Many of us thought so; and when we carried him and the Comte into the hotel, there was not one who would not have given the world to see them recover. The Comte came to his senses first; he had been stunned, it seems, by the fall of a spar, and Maurice must have jumped overboard with him, and swam, holding on to the spar, till they were picked up. He was grieved to the heart, *ce brave petit milord*, and we could not get him to bed till he knew Maurice was alive. And when we were rubbing and warming him, poor fellow, we found he had a chain

of hair round his neck with a little old watch hid in his bosom ; and the Comte looked very hard at it, but he was so ill himself directly after, he had to be carried off to bed. Maurice has not yet spoken. I should not have left him, except to find a better surgeon than we can get near at hand. Ah, sir, as his friend, I may tell you freely, I shall never have such another as he has been to me !'

Then, in the warmth of his demonstrative nature, he told how Maurice saved him from worse than death—from dishonour.

'Yes, sir, I, an officer of France, to whom honour is more than life, blush not to confess to you that I owe it to him, my friend. He had known my father some years ago, and I met him accidentally in Paris, and he found out that a scheme was laid by some *scélérats*, English and French, all equally bad, to plunder me at play, and make me lose, not only all I had of my own, but a sum entrusted to me for the pay of my men. I who speak to you, who shudder when I speak, I was on the brink of that gulf—I was mad, blind, deaf to all but the horror of ruin and the hope of retrieving my loss ; and he came like an angel of deliverance to my side—saved me, ransomed me, and carried me off by force. I have promised him never to play again, and I never will. I do not say I never bet, for I lost my last napoleon yesterday.'

The passage was tolerably rough, and for some time conversation became a matter of difficulty ; nor was Henry Lyndon at all sorry when the steamer arrived at her destination. As he stepped on shore, a face he remembered well, being much too handsome to be

forgotten, appeared, on the look-out, as it seemed, for Jules.

‘Oh, there you are! I hope you had a pleasant trip. Charming amusement this weather. Have you succeeded?—No?—My dear Lyndon, how d’ye do? By what marvellous concatenation of circumstances have you turned up here? Upon my life, I never was better pleased to see any one than I am to see you. Physic makes herself scarce, and Divinity is not forthcoming, so it is a real comfort to have one black Grace, at any rate. How clever of you to guess we might want our affairs put in order! I have just been telling Delaunay, that, as I was silly enough to lose my chance of the House of Lords, I consider myself good for a cool thousand, for my attentions—I do, upon my honour.’

‘But from what I hear, Captain Chester, I cannot but hope your cousin is likely to keep you out of your legacy for the present, however well deserved.’

‘Yes; I labour under that disadvantage, certainly, and the chances are ten to one against my ever being so near the earldom again. He is sure to marry, out of sheer perverseness: and I am such an unfortunately first-rate nurse, he persists in getting better now; but, as I tell him, nothing is so deceptive as convalescence, and it is his duty to make his dear mind easy about all his pecuniary obligations. Upon my life it’s true, though he doesn’t seem to see it. Good news for you, Armand—your hero is better; but don’t go flourishing off again in a hurry, my dear fellow—for between one and another, and the fidget Delaunay makes about him, I am run off my legs; I am, upon my honour; and if you don’t take care, I shall be gone from your

gaze, like a beautiful what's-his-name. I shall expect a codicil in that quarter, too; so don't think you will have all the chances, *mon camarade*! There he goes, tearing off as usual. What ill-made men those French officers are! Tailors' younger sons, mostly, who get their uniforms for nothing. I wish *I* did, I know.'

With all his affectation of indifference, Captain Chester had in reality been in no small trouble, both for his cousin and Randolph; and with the help of Jules Armand, and Lord Delaunay's antiquarian travelling companion, Mr. Hope, had divided his attentions between them day and night. As neither of the three had ever nursed anybody before—for it was still in the days of the thirty-nine years' peace, and the hussar (who was afterwards at Balaklava and Scutari) knew better how to handle a sick horse than a sick man—the *sous-lieutenant* had only a boyish recollection of his mother's *tisane*—and the antiquary could have given a lecture on the drugs and pharmacy of the old physicians, possibly have compounded the manna of St. Nicholas, if required, but was in a happy state of ignorance touching the new—it was easy to believe the patients would owe a great deal to nature. Still, it was a comfort to hear they were doing well, and Henry privately resolved to take his own measures with his friend Randolph, if not satisfied with those of other people. They walked on to the hotel, Captain Chester talking all the way.

'Charming little *bijou* of a place this, is it not? especially at this time of year, and in this stage of completion. So refreshingly unsophisticated. You ask for a cup of coffee, and they bring you a regular service, and the biggest article is the tea-spoon; and

mine hostess holds the leg of mutton in one hand, and slices away with the other. They are building busily here, and in a few years it is to be another Brighton; and, except that there is nothing to see, and nothing to do, and nothing to eat, I cannot conceive a more attractive spot. Nothing would please Delaunay but he must come and drop a tear to William the Conqueror's glorious memory, in his chateau, and see my friend Shirley's new life-boat, the precious article that was nearly the death of some of us; and the consequence is, that we are all heroes now, and you can't conceive a greater nuisance to a shy man like myself. They threaten crowning one with evergreens, like May-day what's-his-name—and making poems about us! Imagine a nervous gentleman holding her Majesty's commission, put to such torture! I have had to shake hands with more fat men, and do the civil to more worthy mothers of families in white cotton night-caps, than I ever could have conceived possible; and it is lucky I have Delaunay's purse to draw upon, for every mother and mother's son expects a five-franc piece at least. I do not know what Delaunay will say to it, but I know they will not let him off without some piece of attention in the way of a banquet, or a procession, or something, civic or military. I am not sure which would be the greater bore of the two.'

'You have shown nerve enough in danger,' said Henry, smiling, 'to make one hope it may be equal even to the laurel crown.'

'My dear fellow, if they would only send me a decent hairdresser to get rid of the vile salt-water that my very brains are steeped in, that is all I ask of the national gratitude, and Matilda may twine her wreaths,

not for me, but for Maurice Randolph, who has had a touch-and-go escape from the cypress bough. He is quite laid up, poor fellow, and it is uncommonly lucky, for we fully expected we should have to shoot him, that is to say, if he did not shoot *us*.'

'Indeed?'

'Yes. Delaunay, it seems, knew more of him than was pleasant, and took care he should know it; and we were expecting him to send a message of some kind, when the freak seized us all to go frog-fishing in this eccentric way, and now, I suppose, it will be out of the question.

'I trust so. I hope to convince Lord Delaunay that, instead of knowing too much, he does not know quite enough of my friend Mr. Randolph.'

'Well, if you can, it will put things on velvet, for then he can apologize, and they can shake hands. It is very awkward as it is, for he certainly saved Delaunay's life, and, as I tell my cousin, it is very generous on my part to forgive his officiousness. Here is our hotel; and while you are making your arrangements, I will let him know you are come.'

When Henry Lyndon, after satisfying himself about Randolph's state, was admitted to the Earl's room, he was struck by the feverish eagerness with which he was received. Lord Delaunay was sitting over a little stove, muffled in his cloak, and shivering as if it were winter; but his face was flushed and excited, and he could hardly wait till they were alone before he began, 'You are come to tell me something, Mr. Lyndon—what is it?'

'First, my lord, that I am very glad to see you safe. It was more than I had reason to expect.'

‘You know, then, all that has passed? How?’

‘I know enough to have made me lay aside every other consideration and follow you, to prevent, as far as a man’s power could, your being so fatally misled one step farther.’

‘Sit down, sir, I beg, and do not keep me in suspense. Tell me exactly what you mean.’

‘You must permit me, then, to ask first, if you did not receive a letter from Miss Conway, accusing Mr. Randolph of mean and unworthy conduct towards your family in general, and your sister in particular? No wonder you look astonished; and when once you have admitted the fact, I am prepared to explain how I know it.’

‘I do admit it, and I wait for your explanation; for, I confess, Mr. Lyndon, it seems to me to require a very satisfactory one.’

‘Happily, my lord, Miss Conway’s own ingenuity has put that in my power.’

He briefly but forcibly detailed the facts, to his auditor’s manifest disgust and amazement.

‘Mr. Powys being of my opinion, that such a misunderstanding might lead to serious results, I felt it my duty to come off at once, and prevent them, if possible. I *know* the accusation to be untrue; but as your lordship is not bound to take my word against your cousin’s, I only demand, in justice to all, that you investigate the matter—that you take Lady Adelaide’s testimony, and get at the *facts*—before you allow yourself to be guided by the bare, unproved assertions of a lady, whom I hesitate not to charge, deliberately, with a design to mislead you altogether.’

‘A very serious charge, Mr. Lyndon.’

‘I feel it to be so, my lord; therefore I make it seriously; for it involves vital interests. Your own happiness—that of your mother—that of your maligned and neglected sister, who has no one to plead for her but myself—all may depend on the decision you make. If it can be proved that, for some purpose of her own, Miss Conway has misrepresented facts in one instance, it may no less be proved in another; and I am prepared to prove it, when called upon.’

Lord Delaunay was silent some time; in considerable agitation.

‘Mr. Lyndon,’ he said, at last, ‘I have the highest opinion of your character, and therefore can own to you that your assertion fills me with dismay. I thought my cousin’s letter bitter and unwomanly, but to doubt its truth it never occurred to me for a moment. I must have time to think, and a little more strength before I act. Be assured I will investigate the matter thoroughly, and see justice done. I felt the other night, so brave a man could never have acted a dishonourable part—his whole conduct belied the possibility. But one thing I must insist upon. That letter was confidential, and intended for my eyes alone. The circumstances that have made you and Mr. Powys acquainted with its purport, give you no right to make use of that knowledge without my consent; and I require of you both, that it be held sacred. Promise me this, for yourself, and for him.’

‘Of course,’ wrote Henry to the latter, in relating what passed, ‘I had no choice but to comply, and send you the very words of his injunction. I had a long and earnest conversation with him, and he seems deeply grateful for the pains I have taken, and for the comfort

of being able to think well of the gallant man to whom he mainly owes his life. I have cleared up several difficulties already, and am as hopeful of the result as I can be with a man of his peculiar disposition. He knew nothing of his mother's movements till I told him of her being laid up at Cannymoor; and grieved as he is for her accident, it seems a great satisfaction to his mind that she is at last under the same roof with his sister. May the result answer his expectations!

'I am sitting by Maurice Randolph's bed. He is sensible, but in too much pain and fever to converse—no wonder. I fear it is a rheumatic attack, that will keep him a close prisoner for some time. But both are doing well, and their friends will feel their sufferings are more than compensated by the worse peril they have escaped, and the merciful deliverance they have helped to effect.

'I have just been sent for to Lord Delaunay. He is in great trouble; having discovered accidentally that Captain Chester, misunderstanding a wish he expressed when he was first able to collect his thoughts, sent off an unfinished letter directed to Lady Delaunay, which he had slipped into its envelope when the alarm of the fire was given, intending to complete it afterwards, if at all. This letter must have caused her great alarm and anxiety. I have only a moment to catch this mail, but the Earl entreats you, by all your tried friendship, if possible, to take the news of his safety to her yourself; and tell her from him, that he retracts his words, and entreats her pardon for his error. When they meet he will explain all. I shall write to Cannymoor to-morrow.'

This letter reached Mr. Powys simultaneously with

the newspaper containing an account of the exploit ; and his fear lest his friend should learn the first intelligence through that channel, made him at once accede to the request, and hurry down to Cannymoor. It was a trying and anxious journey, but he felt amply repaid when he found the comfort his arrival gave ; and he was easily persuaded, instead of putting up at the village inn, to occupy Mr. Lyndon's room, in which a bed had been hastily prepared. Lady Delaunay did not ask many questions that night—she was too worn out to do more than comprehend the mercy, and accept it, with a sensation of relief that could only find vent in broken ejaculations of thanksgiving. Nature was exhausted ; and her prostration was so great, her daughter watched by her bedside the greater part of the night, in silent thankfulness, as heartfelt as her own—though some of it was given to man.

CHAPTER XIII.

And, oh! the home whence thy bright smile hath parted,
 Will it not seem as if the sunny day
 Turned from its door away?
 While through its chambers wandering, weary-hearted,
 I languish for thy voice, which past me still
 Went like a singing rill!

MRS. HEMANS.

THE first beams of the rising sun raised Adelaide Lyndon from the short sleep which watchfulness and anxiety had allowed her. As consciousness and recollection returned, the power of resting fled; and a feverish longing for a breath of morning air, made her rise and dress hastily, to seek refreshment in a stroll in the garden. As she passed Mr. Powys's door, it was ajar, and she heard him, early as it was, in full conclave with Anderson, who was just replying, 'I have made every inquiry, sir, without success; but I rather think Lady Adelaide could give you some information on the subject.'

What this might mean she did not wait to discover, but hastened out. It was a mild March morning, such as sometimes visits us between the gales, with promises of spring, and hints about primroses and violets, that have a wonderful effect in cheering the spirits. A favourite warm nook, in which the earliest of these sweet messengers were always to be found, rewarded

her search ; and as she stooped to gather them, a quick step on the gravel behind her announced the approach of their visitor.

The frank, kindly manner that no one could resist, made Mr. Powys popular, go where he might ; and from the little intercourse between them overnight, she had already begun to look upon him as a friend. With a pleasant remark on her early habits, he gladly accepted her violets, and offering his arm, they walked up and down together, quietly enjoying the freshness of the air and the song of the birds. His anxiety, however, on one subject made him hasten to introduce it. From what Anderson had said, he believed she was aware of the object of Lady Delaunay's journey, and if she could in any way relieve his mind on the score of his imprudent little friend, it would be a great obligation. She was only too glad to be quit of the responsibility, and when he knew what she had done for Lilla Brittan, had the comfort of his hearty approval and thanks.

‘When can I see this poor child, do you think, Lady Adelaide ? I should like to ascertain what her state of mind is, before I meet Lady Delaunay again ; for the sooner she knows she is safe the better, though you did quite right to say nothing about it last night. Is the Rectory near at hand ?’

‘About ten minutes’ walk. We should find them sitting down to breakfast if we went there now. Dr. Home is earlier than we are.’

They set out accordingly. Mr. Powys looked inquisitively about him, asked about their services, and where the new school was to be ; praised the neatness of the churchyard, if he could not the architectural beauty of

the church, and was still talking when they entered the rectory gate. Lilla Brittan, just come down to breakfast by a stupendous exertion of virtue, bounded in her chair at the well-known sound, and when they appeared, hid her glowing face between her arms. She need not have been so alarmed; he was much too sorry for her to say a word of anger, and his first greeting was one of congratulation on finding such good friends. Then he sat down to talk to the rector, and in a few minutes they found they had met before, years ago—knew ever so many mutual acquaintance, and were soon in a full tide of sociable conversation, during which Lilla gradually recovered her spirits and courage. It was not till after the visitors had partaken of the family breakfast, that Mr. Powys asked her if she would take a turn with him round the garden; and while he was winning her to a full account and confession of all her adventures and faults, Lady Adelaide found the opportunity she was longing for, of pouring out her full heart to her old friend. She had so much to tell him of yesterday's terror and deliverance, it did not strike her at first how agitated her listener was—nor how tremulous were his low, earnest expressions of thankfulness, even while he heard that Maurice was on a sick bed. Her own tears fell fast as she named him, and what he had saved her from in saving her brother.

‘There is no one but yourself, sir, to whom I can say freely what I feel; you, who are his friend, as well as mine, will receive from me the gratitude I have no means of expressing to himself. The obligation is overwhelming, and yet I gladly accept its burden, and know it must rest on me for life. If I could only be near him in his sufferings, to watch and wait upon

him as a sister, I should count it an honour ; but there is nothing I can do but to bless him, and pray God to bless him—as I did on my knees last night and this morning, and ever shall, while I have voice to utter or thought to lift in prayer !’

The old rector passed his rough hand several times across his eyes, and tried hard to find his usual steadiness of voice, which the harassing anxiety he had felt had considerably shaken.

‘Truly,’ he said, at last, with a slow earnestness not very common to him, ‘the lad has been saved, though as by fire ; and since he was ready to give you his life, these gentle words do not misbecome your womanly dignity, neither do these tears your kind feelings ; I accept them in his name, for I know he would think himself overpaid.’ Then, with a sudden burst of suppressed emotion, that so took him by surprise he had no time to force it back, he caught her by the hands, the tears running down his weatherworn cheeks.

‘Do you know *now* what the man is, you told me could never be your friend ? Do you feel *now* that it is no degradation to be served by him ? Can you be grateful without wounding your pride, at last ? I always hoped you would ; and now that you have been so open with me, I will have no secrets with you. I have been wretched enough on your account, and his ; it is time you knew why, and knew him. Read that.’

And Adelaide read, as well as her moistened eyes would allow her, that outpouring of anguish and tenderness that had gushed from Randolph’s aching heart on that terrible night, when death, in its worst

form, had worn the image of a deliverer ; and the last thought he had expressed, had been of love for her—the love of which she had never heard till this moment.

He had loved her—loved her from the first—unknown to himself so long—unacknowledged by a single word to her—he, whose contempt had thrown a blight on her early promise, whose enmity had steeped these latter days in gall, whose benefits had appeared but a more polished form of humiliation and affront—he, whom she had begun to think of as, at the best, softening towards her with a patronizing pity—had loved her all the while so ardently, so disinterestedly, so tenderly as *this* !

Hers had been no woman's nature to receive unmoved such a revelation ; the quick blushes that gave her cheeks the past bloom of seventeen, dishonoured not the dark dress of her widowhood ; nor were the soft tears of humility and emotion out of place in eyes that had wept so many of desolation and grief. But the vision of the past that rose with them, was so blended in its hues, so strange a mixture of pleasure and sorrow, that when she at last found nerve to lift her eyes to the rector's watching face, it was with a look in which the pleasure took the form of a tear, and the sadness of a smile.

'One by one,' she said, 'my heaviest burdens are lightened or rolled away. *This* has removed a very heavy one ; I can now look back with more courage ; I shall in time learn to feel grateful for that regard which now adds to my sense of unworthiness. But *you*, who have such influence over him—my own true friend and his—try and turn his generous heart elsewhere ! Do not let him, loving him as you do, build

his happiness any longer on that which can never repay him—never! The soil is exhausted, the ship is no longer seaworthy, the walls are crumbling, and the hearth-fire gone out; there will be no harvest for his toil, no haven for his voyage; no rest, no peace for him to dwell among! Do you think *I* do not know, better than most, what a lifelong, earnest affection from such a nature would deserve?—a nature, that even when I shunned and dreaded, I never ceased to honour for what I knew. And would I offer him in return a worn, sick heart, whose utmost ambition now is to finish its work, be reconciled, and at rest? No—life has better things in store, I hope and trust, for one so generous and brave: and some day he will acknowledge it, and be grateful then, perhaps, to *me*.'

It had been a matter of no small anxiety among the nurses, what the effect of the preceding day would be on Lady Delaunay; and it was a relief beyond expectation to find, that, in spite of everything, she was as one refreshed in body and spirit. The heroism of her son cheered her like a gift from Heaven; more than she would have told any living being, or have owned, had she been charged with it. His having suffered in the act, made her pride in him the greater, and the removal of the dreadful fear under which she had laboured, produced a re-action much healthier in its tone than could have been hoped or expected. After a refreshing sleep, she rose with calmed nerves and renovated strength; ready to look her duties in the face, and as resolute to carry out the plan of conduct she had laid down, as if she had never felt a moment's weakness, mental or physical. As she was bent on

coming downstairs, the study was prepared for her reception, that she might not be molested by visitors, or disturbed by Mrs. Lyndon; and as soon as she was installed there, Mr. Powys paid her a visit. He had told Lady Adelaide as they walked home from the Rectory, that he was satisfied Lilla Brittan had had punishment enough, and was only now an object for tenderness and pity; but he had his doubts how the Countess would receive her; she had her own peculiar views on the subject, and no arguments of *his* ever seemed to move her an inch. She might forgive, but she would not forget, or allow other people to do so.

‘*Can* those forget who are forgiven?’ said Adelaide, with a deep sigh. ‘But I do not think the poor girl has much to fear; and she has promised me to submit, let my mother’s decision be what it may.’

‘That is her wisest plan, certainly. If there is a woman to whose magnanimity I would entrust despotic power sooner than another, it is Lady Delaunay; but the more helpless and the more passive an offender, the safer she is in her hands. Will you name the subject to her, or shall I?’

‘It will be better for the poor girl, sir, if you will undertake it. It can be no secret to you, I know, what my position is: no one can sympathize with such repentance more, or assist it less.’

‘I do not agree with you,’ said he, with great kindness; ‘I think example is the greatest assistance possible, and since you have permitted me to allude to the subject, I may venture to add, that little as there is in my power, what there is, you may command, if you will trust me. Those who love and revere Lady

Delaunay most, must be the most deeply interested in seeing her made happy.'

'Ah, sir, if I could only hope in any way to add to her happiness, it would indeed be worth waiting and suffering for. Hitherto, I have only caused her grief.'

'Yes,' said he, 'that may be, for there is no grief like the gnawing of an inflexible resentment; and that has been hers, and with all her virtues has embittered her life. She will never be happy till that is gone, though she may have to learn the great lesson of mercy, as Jonah did, by finding a worm in her favourite gourd. Win her by patience and submission, and you will put a new spirit into her whole existence. And for yourself,' pressing the hand she held out in grateful silence, 'be of good courage; for all that friendship can do for you is being, and shall be done.'

Lady Delaunay could, at first, talk only of her son; and when he had read her again, as much of Henry Lyndon's letter as was not strictly private, and they had fully discussed the subject of the exploit and escape, she naturally began to ask for more explanations than he could give. Forbidden by the Earl to be explicit, he declined having anything to do with it, and referred her to her son, who considered the matter entirely his own. She grew rather impatient at this.

'There seems to be no end to mysteries everywhere; hope I shall understand them in time.'

'I hope you will,' said he. 'If I had my own way, you should know everything now; more than I know myself. I feel sure that whatever mistakes have been made, or acts of injustice done, have all arisen from

half information—whether intentionally mutilated or not.’

‘You think, then, injustice has been done? Speak openly.’

‘I am afraid so; severity may be called injustice when pushed too far; but if you ask for my proofs, I have not many to give. Such as they are, they all tend to show that you have some one in your confidence, who is in the habit of not telling you the exact truth. Must I speak plainer?’

‘No, no!’ she said, wildly, covering her eyes with a shudder; ‘my own thought! and I cannot yet face it—I dare not!’

There was a pause of some minutes; she seemed strongly agitated.

‘No, no!’ she again repeated, ‘it is impossible! it must be! Mistaken in her opinions, erroneous in her judgment, hasty in her conclusions, she may have been: great misunderstandings there certainly *have* been; all these may be, shall be remedied, when I can unravel them, and decide what is best for all; but such a horrible thought as that, against one who has eaten my bread, and drunk of my cup, and been to me as a daughter, it were ingratitude for her affection, it were injustice in me to admit. You would say so, if you knew all.’

‘Perhaps so,’ said he, with an expressive smile. ‘I do not know much about it, but I am learning; and unless I am much deceived, so are you. I will not interfere with your teacher; you cannot have a better.’

‘I need one,’ she returned, with mournful humility, but still with the firmness of one whose resolution was taken; ‘my task is very difficult, and my responsibility

very heavy, but I must not shrink from either. Where I have bestowed my trust and esteem, I will not withdraw it without convincing proof; where I have withdrawn it, I will not give it back without probation. On that subject I dare say no more. Now to one that weighs on my heart. You have heard, no doubt, of my failure, and Anderson's, in discovering that poor lost child. Do you think you could spare time to try, till I am a little stronger ?'

He made one of his emphatic grimaces of shrewd good-nature.

'Not unless I know what I am to do if I find her.'

'Nothing very severe,' said Lady Delaunay, smiling. 'Try and convince her that she had better trust her real friends, even if they check and correct her faults. You can conscientiously do that, I know.'

'Indeed I can; it is a lesson I would gladly instil into wiser minds than poor little Miss Brittan's. And if I succeed, and persuade her to submit to you, and wait your decision, what is to be my reward?'

'The one you will like best; the pleasure of bringing her to me to be forgiven.'

'Then I can tell you it is won already, but not by me. Our Perdita was found yesterday; and there,' pointing to the lawn, where Adelaide and Walter were walking together by Mrs. Lyndon's Bath chair, 'there is the friend who persuaded her to trust in your love, and bear your anger. The recompence ought to be hers.'

A few words sufficed for explanation. Whatever severity Lady Delaunay might profess, she could not conceal her gladness at the news of her *protégé's* safety, relieving her of a vague dread that had oppressed her ever since her flight. He had no difficulty in getting her assent to his suggestion: she wrote on a

slip of paper, 'Bring Lilla Brittan to me directly ;' and a tap against the window brought Walter in, who was sent to deliver it to his mother. The result was, that in less time than could have been supposed possible, Lady Adelaide, breathless with the good speed she had made, appeared at the door, with the trembling culprit hanging on her arm. Mr. Powys admitted them with a smile of congratulation, and passed out ; Lady Delaunay extended her hands, and Lilla, with a great outburst of crying, flung herself into her arms, clung round her neck, kissed her dress, her feet, sobbing all the while, with the vain attempt to utter what she wanted to say about her sorrow and remorse ; and the more she sobbed and struggled, the more gently and pityingly did the Countess soothe and caress. The sceptre of mercy was laid on her neck, and there was nothing more to fear but her own unworthiness of such love.

Adelaide watched them in silence ; there was no envy in her nature, and she could be glad, and was glad, to see another rescued from her own doom ; but her longing for a share of that unrestrained tenderness, of which a gleam had visited her last night, but seemed lost again to-day, made her heart swell grievously, as she stood by unnoticed ; and she turned at last to leave them to themselves. Lady Delaunay stopped her.

'Do not go, Adelaide, without receiving my thanks. You have done me a service I shall never forget.'

She held out her hand ; her daughter took it and pressed it to her lips.

'Ah, madam, if I only knew how to serve and please you, I should have something left to hope.'

'You think so? Have the kindness to wait a few minutes. Lilla, my dear, I am not going to keep you

now, for I am still weak, and have a great deal to do and think of. I shall hope to see Dr. Home soon, and thank him in person; meanwhile you must thank him for me, and as soon as possible I will let you know what I have arranged. Go, and begin a new course from this time.'

Lilla retired, feeling as if she had suddenly broken out of a dreadful dream into a sunny morning; and Adelaide stood waiting her mother's pleasure.

'As this child's rescue,' said Lady Delaunay, after a short silence, 'was the object of my journey here, I have nothing now to detain me the moment my strength allows me to travel. The accounts from France will decide my movements—either to go over to Delaunay, or to meet him wherever he lands, whichever he prefers; but in either case, if you have no objection, I should like to take Walter, to spend a few months with me and his uncle, before we settle what school would be most for his advantage.'

'Walter!' repeated Adelaide, gasping for breath. She was quite unprepared for this, and seemed robbed of all presence of mind.

'Yes; can you trust him to my care?'

'You wish to take him with you—*now*? For how long? Months, did you say? oh, impossible—impossible! You only say it to try me.—I know you do!' And she looked at her mother with wide, piteous eyes, as if appealing against a jest so cruel; but Lady Delaunay's calm voice compelled her to believe it was in earnest.

'I am sorry you should think it impossible: of course, if you object, I have no power to carry out my wish—I have only expressed it.'

Adelaide flung herself on her knees before her, and clasped hers in passionate supplication.

‘No power? You are all-powerful over me, and you know it. You know, you see, how I tremble under your hand—how I bow before you as before no earthly being I ever bowed, honouring in you the sacred authority God has given—which in despising once, I sinned against Him! Mother, is this your test? this the proof I am to give of my sincerity and obedience? Have pity upon me! I have suffered so much in so short a time—I have not yet learned how to do without the smile on his face, the sound of his step, of his laugh, that formed my world of comfort when I had no other. I know a day must come for us in some degree to separate: I have been trying to prepare for it: but not so soon—not so suddenly—not so far apart! You know your will is law; if you persist, I must obey; I throw myself on your mercy—any test, any sacrifice but this!’

Her vehemence and rapidity took Lady Delaunay by surprise: it was not till her voice was choked by a sob, that she could make herself heard.

‘Why all this bitter distress, Adelaide? Do you really suppose I would tear your child from you against your will, and keep him away from you by force? Have I ever shown myself such a tyrant? Calm yourself, and try and reason calmly. Is it not for his advantage to see different scenes and people before entering a public school, and to become acquainted with his uncle, and more at home with me? Say so, if you think it is *not*, and let him miss this opportunity, if you will: only remember, it may never be repeated. I shall name it no more; for unless you can give full consent, and feel

complete confidence in my care, it would, of course, be out of the question ; so do not make yourself and me so needlessly unhappy as all this.'

The gentleness of the remonstrance made Lady Adelaide feel rather ashamed of her own impetuosity : she looked up in her mother's face, and saw that, if not offended, she was pained and very grave.

'It is of very little use, Adelaide,' she continued, slowly, as if in answer to the look, 'to profess a complete acquiescence in all my wishes, whatever they may be, if I am liable to such trying scenes of distress the moment they are named.'

Lady Adelaide rose, and stood humbly before her ; her head bowed down, though with dignity even in its submission. 'I was wrong : it was my weakness overcame me—I was taken by surprise. Do not suppose I fear to trust him with you ; do not think me ungrateful. He will be in better hands than mine—he shall go with you ; he loves you already, and I know you cannot help loving *him*. It is for his good—yes, I own it, and I was selfish in my resistance, for I thought only of myself. It shall not be repeated, my dear mother. You shall have your wish, and have it in your own way, freely and without complaint ; give me a little time, and I shall feel the gratitude it deserves. I know it is all meant in kindness.'

She looked at her earnestly, and then added, 'Are you satisfied ? Will that please you, dear mother ?'

'It ought,' said Lady Delaunay, as with a smile, partly sad, but full of sweetness, she rose from her chair, and taking her daughter's hand, kissed her on the brow and cheek.

'As equal salutes equal, I once more salute you.

The bravest of your ancestors never fought a harder battle than yours, or struggled more gallantly for victory. Courage, courage still! and though, it may be, through honourable wounds, the conqueror's reward will be won at last!

'Alas!' thought Adelaide, as she turned silently away, 'may it not be bought too dearly, and given too late?'

It was her last repining thought; all the energy of her nature was now called up to the work before her—that of obeying, not only without resistance, but as if with her own free will. Before facing Walter, she broke the ice by naming the subject to her sisters, and received the first blow in the conflict she was to wage, in their intense astonishment, not at his being invited—that was a matter of exultation—but that *she* was to be left behind. They had been settling between themselves (and it had been no small comfort after their father's horrid letter yesterday, full of nothing but hints that they should all be ruined) that after all this, it stood to reason and common sense, that the Countess would either take Adelaide back to town with her, or arrange when she was to follow; and when once Adelaide was in London and comfortably settled, it would not matter so much if they had to let the Manorhouse for a time, and go there too, to be near her, and Henry and Emma—and how nice that would be! But this was quite a different thing; and but for real pity for the mother's beseeching eyes, which belied the would-be cheerful satisfaction with which she detailed the scheme, Penelope would have given vent to a vast amount of spleen—which, as it was, she reserved for the private benefit of Lucy.

Emma's first impulse was a throb of pity that made her clasp her own little one tight, wondering what she should do if called upon to give her up to anybody. But she persisted in taking the bright side of the question with Adelaide, so as to make her feel she had done perfectly right in consenting, both on Walter's account and her own—as it was certainly meant for the boy's advantage, and *must* be intended to pave the way for a complete reconciliation.

‘Depend upon it, she longs to have you both, but thinks that would be going too fast. Only see how much ground you have won, step by step, since she came; and now you will have a representative whose face will plead for you better than any words! Oh, I was sure all would come right in the end; and it will. Only go on being patient—how you have done it all this time astonishes *me*—I am afraid my temper would have given way a dozen times already, and if such a proposal had been made to me—Oh, promise me one thing—that if she keeps him too long, and you feel at all anxious, or that you really do want to be in town within his reach, you will just do as Henry said, and come to us.’

It was rather like teaching rebellion, and Adelaide durst not indulge the idea, but it comforted her, nevertheless.

The next step was to tell Walter. He was quite taken by surprise. Go with his grandmamma? He should like nothing in the whole world so much—it would be the jolliest fun possible, if mamma went too. Ah, but that was not to be; he was growing a great boy now, and it was time he learned to do without her for a little while, and to take care of himself, before he

went to school. He could not have her *there*, and it would help her to feel happier about him afterwards, if he had a little experience first. She wanted to see if he could keep up the habits she had tried to instil, when she was not at hand to remind him of his duty. His grandmamma would be very kind and good to him, and he must obey and please her in everything, as he had obeyed and pleased herself.

‘I trust you, Walter, to make her happy in having you with her. Will you promise me to try?’

Oh dear yes; he could see no difficulty in that. He could read to her, or she could read to *him*, which was much pleasanter; and he could push her Bath chair, as he did poor granny’s at home, or give her his arm when she walked. And she could take him to see all the great London sights, the big electrifying machine she had talked about, and the dissolving views, and all the lions and tigers, and to hear Faraday’s lectures. How jolly it would be!

It looked rather as if Lady Delaunay’s happiness was to consist in amusing *him*, but his mother was too relieved by his good spirits to throw any damp on his sanguine expectations. If a momentary pang shot through her heart to think how easily he seemed to take the idea of leaving her, it was quelled by another of self-reproach, as she saw that in the delighted bewilderment of his new prospects, he by no means realized what the separation would be. She was spared the pain of overcoming reluctance, and for that, at *least*, she ought to feel thankful—and tried hard.

When Mr. Powys heard the new arrangement, he made one of his ambiguous gestures, half smile, half

wrath; put on his hat, and walked five times round the garden, before he offered any comment at all. After cooling down his feelings by this slight exercise, he came back, looking more amiable, to challenge Walter to a game; and from that moment they were inseparable. His previous positive assertion that he must return to town directly, was found to admit of a little modifying; as they were all so good as to press him, he should wait to escort Lady Delaunay; an arrangement which gave satisfaction to everybody—to Walter in particular—and above all, to his mother. Lady Adelaide might and did regret and apologize, when she saw their dignified clerical visitor disentangling and re-modelling a hopeless kite-tail that had baffled even her maternal patience; cutting up his own particular *Guardian* to supply deficiencies, and finally, when it was fairly in flying order, racing with it all over the grounds, with Walter at his heels;—she might look distressed, when that young gentleman lay in wait on the sideboard to jump on his back, and then made him carry him to the very top of the house to see his ‘skeletons’—unhappy, wo-begone remnants of soaked plants, in every stage of decomposition, on which Walter discoursed the meeting at length, with more or less accuracy,—until the subject of skeletons being started, *apropos* of ghost-stories—he was next discovered sitting on his new friend’s knee, with staring eyes, and hair on end, hugging him round the neck, partly with terror, partly with delight—beseeching him, whenever he attempted to stop, to go on, only five minutes longer—just this once! But notwithstanding all her distress, and all her polite attempts to rescue the too good-natured guest, she felt, every hour of his stay—as

he meant she should,—that her boy had found another friend.

And then came all the minor cares and perplexities of a mother with a scanty purse, who has to send off a boy on short notice, and knows that his equipment is not all she wishes it to be. His shirts were just finished, that was a comfort; and everything he had was as tidy as ladylike abhorrence of disorder could keep it under the circumstances; but who that ever had to do with boys, knows not how far their skill in destruction will shoot beyond the industry and watchfulness of their guardians? It was just the close of winter, too, and his change of suit had been waiting for sundry excellent reasons; and turn his wardrobe over as she might, she could not make it present such an aspect as her motherly pride wished it to do before his strange relations. There was plenty of work for her fingers, however, as it was, the time being very limited; and Emma, finding out what she was doing, came and brought a nimble pair of hands, well trained to the business by active brothers; and cheered her as much by her sympathy in the cause, and anxiety that he should do them all credit, as by her actual help.

In answer to his mother's letter, offering to come to him wherever he pleased, Lord Delaunay wrote to request she would be at Dover by a day that he named, so that he might find her there on his arrival. He was nearly well enough to leave Trouville, but intended to make a circuit, and return to England by Calais, as he had promised to meet the Shirleys there, and see another trial of the life-boat. He was particularly anxious to see his mother, so hoped she would not object to meeting him. Mr. Randolph was better,

but would not be equal to an interview, he feared, before he left. So much of the letter Lady Delaunay made public, and it decided her movements, as far as she was personally concerned ; but she was in strong doubt about Lilla Brittan. To take her back to Bryanstone Square, and leave her with Mrs. Marsden and Miss Conway, even for the short time she expected to be away, did not appear advisable, though she hardly liked to own it to herself. Lilla's own manner, when it was hinted at, showed her that ; and Mr. Powys unhesitatingly pronounced it to be out of the question. But a suggestion he had been revolving ever since he saw her, appeared to offer so many advantages, it was finally agreed upon. This was, that Dr. Home, whom he had sounded on the subject, should receive her temporarily as a boarder, and allow her and Sophy to carry on their education together. He came to see Lady Delaunay, and talk it over, frankly owning his inability to give his grand-daughter the advantages he could wish ; and which a small addition to his income would enable him to do. As far as he could, he had hitherto been her sole instructor, and his young guest should share his personal tuition, as well as that of the teachers he should procure from Lilford. What Lady Delaunay heard and saw of him, made her gladly assent to the plan, and the main point once decided, minor particulars were easily arranged ; the Countess's ideas were rather more liberal than the rector would permit, and Lilla was rather alarmed at first, on hearing that Sophy learned Italian, and Latin, and Euclid—but on the whole all seemed to promise well.

It had been Dr. Home's fixed determination, before he saw Lady Delaunay, that nothing should prevent

his making such an assault on her conscience and feelings, as must immediately result in a complete reconciliation with her daughter; but he changed his mind after the first interview; and owned to Mr. Powys, he was quite ashamed at his age, to find how easily he could be silenced by a woman.

‘I shook her once, though,’ said he, ‘when I told her how that poor thing’s mother came at last to pardon and receive her, and was only in time to see her die. I saw her proud lip tremble *then*, at any rate. Well, I will do my best to keep up her daughter’s courage. When people do wrong, they must bear the punishment; and, as you say, interference may do harm instead of good. Only, if a spirit like hers is once broken, it will be past human skill to restore, or to replace. Ay, but it is sad work, I can tell you that, to see a young heart grow old before its time.’

During the brief remainder of her stay, Lady Delaunay seemed now to have but one object—that of making herself agreeable to her hospitable entertainers; and as might be supposed, when an honoured guest takes pains to show respect and attention, succeeded marvellously; learning a great deal more of their characters, and getting a clearer insight into their domestic interior, than anybody was at all aware. Miss Lyndon, it is true, confided to Adelaide in a moment of candour, that she never talked to her mother, without feeling unusually sensible—she might say, clever—at the time, and an overwhelming conviction of silliness afterwards. Adelaide herself once happened to come in unexpectedly, just when Lucy was in the midst of a long, confused history of her unfortunate unpopularity, and Walter’s snow-balling,

in which she was floundering in great terror beneath Lady Delaunay's gravely attentive eye ; but she retreated precipitately without being observed, and how the story ended, she never knew. It was evident, at any rate, that the Countess wished to leave a favourable impression behind her ; for she made a point, as Miss Lyndon triumphantly observed, of sitting in the drawing-room two whole afternoons, on purpose to be introduced to their visitors ; and visitors in plenty they had, for all other objects of curiosity appeared utterly insignificant in comparison. Everybody was charmed with the manner in which she took it for granted they were her daughter's friends, and accordingly entitled to her grateful regard ; nor was there one among them who would not have been ready to declare they had always cherished Lady Adelaide as a sister—and really to believe it at the time. As for Miss Lyndon, she was in glory ; nothing, as her guest had expected, could have been devised to give her more complete satisfaction, than her allowing herself to be seen and talked to. It quite reconciled her to Walter's departure, which was announced to all comers as an amicable family arrangement, acceded to as a personal gratification for his dear grandmamma. One ill-advised individual being unlucky enough to ask how it was Lady Adelaide was not going too, received a volley of shot and shell in reply.

‘ Very much obliged to you, but we could not give up both at once ; Lady Delaunay is too considerate for that, in the state of my father and mother's health ; and Adelaide would not leave home just now on any account. We could not refuse to spare Walter, as it was made such a point of ; but we cannot lose my dear

sister at present—thank you all the same for being good enough to mention it!’

Her sister was too busy to be present at these receptions, beyond showing herself for a few minutes. Walter’s preparations fully took up her time. He had been at first rather disappointed to hear the glories of London were to be deferred; but this soon changed into eager anticipation of showing off how well he could swim, and how much he knew about zoophytes, shells, and seaweeds. If mamma were but going! She would scramble about with him anywhere, he knew, and carry every horrible thing he picked up, without a murmur; but he had his doubts about grandmamma, and questioned her going up Dover Cliff with him to see him act Mad Tom at the top, like the picture in Dr. Home’s old Shakespeare. His heart began to misgive him sorely, when he saw all his things packing up, and that as his mother stooped over his box, to contrive, against all known laws of possibilities, to put in some pet articles he had brought, when every corner was filled up already—the tears dropped in with them, leaving a most unmistakeable mark on his prize copy of *Philosophy in Sport*. He put his arms round her neck as she knelt—an attitude in which he had her at a disadvantage, and could hold her as long as he liked—and then and there began to rebel. Why was he to be taken away from her when it made her sorry? He should tell grandmamma, once for all, that she must have both or none; and if she didn’t like it, she might let it alone.

She suffered him to give vent for a little while, partly because if she attempted to interrupt him, he stopped her mouth with a kiss, and her respiration with a hug—

and partly, because it was a sorrowful pleasure to hear him regret they must separate: but when he would listen, she drew him down by her side on the floor, and in her turn, got her arms round *him*.

‘Do you remember one unhappy evening not very long ago, Walter—when I made you my confidential friend, and told you what my greatest sorrow was?’

‘Horrid day! Yes, I *hate* to remember it.’

‘Do you remember how you said, some day, perhaps, you should meet her, and tell her all my unhappiness, and win her back to love me?’

‘Yes, I do;’ and he began to nestle very close.

‘Then will you now prevent my obeying her when she has expressed a wish, meant in real kindness to *you*; or will you go with her cheerfully and lovingly, and by your love and by your conduct, win her to think lovingly of *me*?’

His eyes brightened as he looked up into hers.

‘I’ll do *that*, mamma; see if I don’t! But, I say, I wish I had not let Mr. Randolph have my chain: he can’t care for your hair as I do. If I see him, shall I make him change?’

‘Why, no, my boy; as you made the exchange, I think you must abide by it. So now we will finish your box.’

The last evening had come, and the whole party were assembled in the drawing-room, expecting Dr. Home and his two young ladies, to take leave of Lady Delaunay and Walter. Mr. Powys was playing at spellicans with the latter, persisting, in spite of all remonstrance, in overcoming impossibilities by the simple process of digging his elbow into the middle of

them. Lucy was making tea, and Penelope enjoying the Countess's conversation and anecdotes, which she did with peculiar zest, laying up a store of materials that made her popular for a long time to come. Adelaide, for the last three-quarters of an hour, had been sitting by Mrs. Lyndon, putting her knitting to rights, which during her recent secession, had gone from bad to worse, till Walter's kite tail was a joke to it. As she patiently unravelled rows, and took up stitches, and counted and re-counted, and for the hundredth time, taught, and explained, and assisted her—a sense of loneliness and desertion, that had been gradually creeping over her, as the necessity for action ceased, threw a tenderness in her manner towards this worn and feeble remnant of what she had left to cling to, that at last stirred the poor old lady's dormant feelings. She stroked her hand several times, and patted her cheek. 'I don't think I have seen you all day, have I, my love? You are not going to leave me, are you?'

'No, dear.'

'I thought somebody said something—and I saw a trunk in the passage, and you have been so busy. Is he come?'

'Hush, dear, and take care, or that stitch will drop again. There, I will take it up before it goes further.'

'But some one is going away, I know; why won't you tell me?'

'Do not you remember that Walter is going, and that he will bring you some scarlet wool from London, to knit him a comforter?'

'Ah, but young men—young men—they never think. It is so long now since we heard, and I never knew if

that coat fitted properly, though he promised—' Her eyes were wandering uneasily about the room, as they always did when her brain was at all excited ; but she kept caressing the hand that Lady Adelaide had laid on hers.

' You won't go, will you, my love? I can't do without you ; and you must rest, and take care of yourself ; I dare say your own dear friends will spare you ; it is so good of you to stay with a stupid old thing like me ; you won't be in a hurry to go, will you ?'

Lady Adelaide's smile, as she assured her she was going to remain, calmed her for the moment ; and she sat, as she did sometimes, placidly looking at her, as if the contemplation of her beauty gave her pleasure. Lady Delaunay's flow of anecdote ceased ; her eyes were irresistibly drawn in the same direction.

' It is nothing,' observed Penelope, thinking she looked uneasy ; ' only a little excitement ; Adelaide knows how to soothe her. I am afraid she has heard and noticed more than we thought she did.'

' How long has she been like this ?' asked Lady Delaunay, kindly.

' She has been gradually getting worse ever since my poor brother Walter went to India.'

Adelaide looked round for a moment with a quick warning gesture, but it was too late. The poor old lady's lips and hands and eyes were already at work, and she began in an emphatic, deliberate tone : ' I am sure he had every excuse—every excuse. I always said so. He couldn't help it, could he? Young people will be young, and they can't care for us as we care for them ; and it was very natural he should like such a sweet face better than his poor silly old mother's. But

oh dear me!’—and with a heavy sigh like a tired-out child, she laid her head on her daughter-in-law’s shoulder—‘I wish—I wish—I wish—that he would come—or that he had never, never gone!’

Lady Adelaide folded her arms round her, and caressed her as if she had been Walter. Penelope had risen, but held back to wait the result. Lucy began to apologize to Lady Delaunay; poor dear mamma was not often like this; she hoped the Countess would make kind allowances, but she could see—

‘I see, indeed,’ said Lady Delaunay, gently, ‘that Mrs. Lyndon has the inestimable comfort of tender and considerate daughters.’

Lady Adelaide bent her head lower over her charge; she could not meet any other eye that moment. Something was said about trying what a little music would do, but she did not look up or pay much attention, till roused by a sweet solemn strain, such as had never issued from the Manorhouse piano since it had borne the name of one; the touch so delicate and firm, the pathos so irresistible. How long it was since she had recognised that sound—how eloquent now appeared its voice! She trembled as she raised her eyes, and saw her mother watching her as she played. One long, earnest look passed between them, and then Lady Delaunay, without turning her head, gradually suffered the harmony that seemed to flow spontaneously from her fingers, to pass into the well-known and beautiful anthem ‘*Oh, rest in the Lord—wait patiently for Him—and He shall give thee thy heart’s desire.*’

Whoever it was meant to soothe, in one respect it succeeded.

The softness, the touching expression of the music,

seemed to have a powerful influence over poor Mrs. Lyndon. Her feeble moaning ceased, the fretful restlessness passed away, and her daughter-in-law was able to lay her gently back on her cushions, where she subsided, according to her usual habit, into a state of placid torpor, from which she was only roused when it was time to retire. As soon as she saw her tranquil, Lady Delaunay returned to her seat; observing, with a smile, as they expressed their admiration and thanks, that she had not done such a thing for months, and it might be months before she did it again. There was no one at home who cared for an old woman's performances.

Adelaide, who had moved nearer involuntarily, stopped when she heard the last words, and leaning over Emma's chair, who was nearest, began to make some remark upon her work. Emma pressed her hand in answer; she could not have said in words how she felt for her at that moment; but even while she did so, she saw her start, and her colour rise, and following her eyes, perceived that a visitor had just been admitted, whom no one expected to see—Mr. Abel Spindler.

He was dressed more carefully than usual, and came in with an elaborate display of sociable friendliness, as if conscious of deserving and claiming a welcome.

'Ladies, your most obedient; I could not leave Cannymoor without paying my respects, and carrying the last news to my good friend Mr. Lyndon, who seems to be detained in London longer than he expected. Mrs. Henry, I hope you have good accounts of your excellent husband; he is very good to spare you to us, I am sure. My Lady Adelaide, I trust I see you well, though I need not ask. May I solicit the

honour of being presented to the Countess De-launay?’

Lady Adelaide had drawn up her tall figure to its full height, and her whole bearing wore more of its old haughtiness than Emma had yet seen. She could not refuse the requested office, but her flashing eye and opening nostril betrayed how she resented its being forced upon her; and the coldness with which it was performed was too marked to be unnoticed. Miss Lyndon did not look much better pleased than her sister at the intrusion, after all that had passed, and plainly intimated they had not expected the pleasure of seeing him while her father was away; at which he only laughed, and looked round, rubbing his hands, as at a capital neighbourly joke. Could he have forgiven himself if he had so failed in what was due to Lady Adelaide, as to go away without an inquiry in person? If he had, he knew she would not have forgiven *him*.

There was not much forgiveness, certainly, in her face, as she watched him going from one to the other, beneath her mother’s calmly observant eye, with all the familiarity of a cherished and welcome family friend; and in his assumed air of easy cheerfulness looking, she thought, more insufferably vulgar than he had ever looked before. But she felt that to check him would only make matters worse; and for Mr. Lyndon’s sake, from whom she daily received long, vehement letters, plainly indicating the excited and harassed state of his mind, entreating her to keep everything secret, and be on civil terms with the enemy—for his sake, to whom she owed so much, she must bear this crowning mortification as best she could. It was hard work; for Mr.

Spindler knew it as well as she did, and took good care she should be aware of the fact.

‘A dish of tea, Miss Lucy, from your hands will indeed be a treat, and a bit of your inimitable cake—thank ye, Mrs. Henry, I wish you a better office. It is a long time since I had this honour, and as it is, I can’t stay long; you must excuse my running away early, for I leave Cannymoor to-morrow, and only wished to see you all, and take Mr. Lyndon the last bulletin of Lady Delaunay. And that reminds me, my Lady Adelaide, I have one little word to say to you—if you will allow me.’

He had taken up his cup of tea and a liberal portion of hot cake as he spoke, and made a step towards her; then he halted, with a slight smile on his lips, waiting for her to come to him. To the surprise of Lady Delaunay, though her colour came and went, and her lip trembled with anger and pride, she yielded as if to a spell she had no power to resist; and for a few minutes they stood together, he talking in a low voice, very eagerly and fast, and she slightly bending her head in reluctant attention, but answering only, as it seemed, in monosyllables, or now and then by a silent gesture. As soon as she was released, she turned away, and retreated as far off as she could; and he immediately crossed over, and sat down by the side of Lady Delaunay.

It had not taken her long to ascertain, that however homely or old-fashioned some of the good people might be to whom she had been already introduced, they were models of good society compared with this new acquaintance; nor could she help noticing that he was regarded, even by her own high-spirited daughter, with

as much dread as dislike. It may therefore be imagined how agreeable she found his conversation. He began by complimenting her on the exploit of her son, giving her to understand that Mr. Randolph was one of his most intimate friends. Then in a more confidential key, he went on to praise Cannymoor, and the houses, and the neighbourhood, and the value of the property, and in five minutes had let her into the secret that *he* was proprietor of nearly all the family estate—in fact, as he jocosely expressed, was the better Lyndon of the two, in all but name. Then he touched on Walter's departure, congratulated him on his good fortune—only hoped they were not going to lose Lady Adelaide too—that would leave them in darkness indeed. What a pity her ladyship was going so soon! Positively, *must* she go to-morrow? He would have had such pleasure in showing her over the whole property, which, of course, must be an interesting object to her; and in explaining his plans for the improvement of the whole neighbourhood, which as Lady Delaunay was known everywhere as the first lady philanthropist of the day, must give her satisfaction. For his part, he thought there was no duty so incumbent on every man as that of making every sixpence go as far as possible—much truer charity than flinging it away because you were asked; the foundation of all true happiness, all real peace and order, was, to his thinking, the *pocket*; and he slapped his own with an emphatic gesture that was too familiar to Lady Adelaide not to catch her ear and eye. She glanced at her mother, and saw by her erect attitude as she sat playing with her hand-screen, that it was only her courtesy prevented her showing how much she was disgusted and offended. Her heart died

within her; what could she do? It was plainly intended, she thought, to show her his power of tormenting, and her position made her more helpless than ever against assaults of this kind. She had just resolved, in desperation, to try if some diversion could not be made, when she caught Mr. Powys's eye, making her a sign, which she obeyed at once, by gliding to his side. 'Excuse me,' he whispered, as she sat down, 'but why do you let such a person as that vex and tire your mother?'

'I cannot help it,' she said, in a low tone of utter dejection. 'I am so situated, that though it is done on purpose to annoy me, I am quite powerless to hinder or resent it.'

'I am sure I know his face; was he not in the house of Ousel and Merriman some years ago, when a young man?'

'Yes; that gentleman whom you heard playing the organ yesterday, is grandson to the then head of the firm; Mr. Spindler often boasts he began there on next to nothing.'

'*That* would be no disgrace, if his character rose with his success. I thought it was the same man. But, my dear Lady Adelaide, I can only say, without wishing to be uncharitable or presuming, he is not a fit person for you to associate with.'

'I have found that out already,' she said, with a faint smile.

'Can I help you? He does not seem to have recognised me yet, but I could make him look exceedingly foolish if I chose. He may forget, but others have sharper memories.'

'No, pray, I entreat you, dear sir, leave him alone.'

If he began any coarse violence when she is by, I should sink with shame. . It is only for one evening more. Oh, here comes the rector at last! I am so glad.'

As she expected, the entrance of these fresh visitors caused a change in the posture of affairs, and Mr. Spindler had no excuse not to move from Lady Delaunay's side. While he was considering what to do next, he found Mr. Powys looking keenly at him, and for the first time recognised his features, unpleasantly connected with by-gones he was disposed to let alone. He turned white, red, and yellow in rapid succession, and seemed to shrink into half his former size. Mr. Powys said nothing, but made a slight sign with his finger to the door. The hint was taken, and when Lady Adelaide, who had gone forward to greet the new comers, looked round again, her enemy had vanished.

With a heart relieved, but still full of misgivings, she watched for an opportunity, when, leaning on the back of her mother's chair, she could at least look the apology she might not utter aloud. It was understood, and accepted; for there was a smile on Lady Delaunay's lips as she whispered, 'Was that a specimen of your intimate society?'

'No, mother,' returned Adelaide, in the same guarded tone, but very earnest, 'only a specimen of trouble which we have to bear.'

'I feared as much; it is worse than I anticipated. Adelaide,' she continued, under cover of a vehement, somewhat uproarious discussion, that had sprung up between Walter and the two young ladies, about what he meant to do when he was away—'Adelaide, I fear

too, that you are suffering me to depart in ignorance of much that I ought to know. My information of your being in difficulties was not so incorrect as I at first supposed.'

'I am in difficulties,' said Adelaide, quietly.

'Of what kind? Tell me in a word.'

'Ah, dear mother, they would be none if I could tell them to you.'

'You will wish you had, Adelaide, when it is too late. You *can* have nothing in common with a man of that stamp, in which a mother's advice, at least, would not be your safest.'

'A mother's?—yes; but I have been so long without that resource, I have been forced to learn to dispense with it. Our paths have gone so widely apart, that in most of my troubles—and this is one—I cannot hope for your sympathy; and where there is no sympathy, there could be no help, were I even at liberty to ask it.'

'I am rebuked,' said Lady Delaunay, mildly; 'but remember—confidence begets confidence.'

'Yes, mother, I know it does; and I have shown you mine to the uttermost. I have given you the most sacred pledge that was yours to ask, or mine to yield. That you have been made the witness, and partly a sharer, of some of our domestic vexations, is something for you to pardon, that I feel, painfully. But if it ever returns to your remembrance, when your displeasure at the unintentional affront is passed, let it occur to you as a motive for indulgence, that I have to bear them still, without my one earthly comforter.'

Lady Delaunay's eyes, do what she might, swam in bright drops of emotion. She laid her hand on her daughter's, and looked up into her pale, resigned face,

with genuine pity and admiration that she attempted not to disguise.

‘My daughter, you have given him up at my desire, to show me your submission to my will. I have accepted this as obedience; what will you do for me now out of love?’

The sudden gleam on Adelaide’s countenance was as if a sunbeam had broken through a cloud. She followed her mother’s expressive glance to where Lilla was now sitting by Mr. Powys, smiling and flushed, but rather shy and downcast, as if receiving a little good-natured advice, that was more wholesome than flattering or palatable.

‘That young thing is a charge left on my hands, which I fear I have failed in keeping aright. A younger, more attractive friend, whom she would love, as girls do, with all her heart—silly as it may be in its effusions—might set her in the way of improvement, and help her to become what she was designed to be. Such a friend and guardian let her find in you—for my sake.’

There was a soft pressure laid upon her shoulders; the nearest approach to an embrace that Adelaide had yet dared to offer.

‘Now, my dearest mother, I at last believe that you will one day forgive me.’

And in that hope, and with that last touch of gentleness, she went through the parting of the next day; talked cheerfully to Walter to the last minute, and seemed to forget herself and her feelings entirely, that nothing might agitate her mother, or cause her a painful thought. She refrained from word or look that might seem an appeal to her sensibility; only when the moment came for Lady Delaunay to enter the carriage,

silently offered her, with an eloquent glance, a bunch of violets, fresh plucked and full of fragrance; and as she accepted them, bent down, and kissed her hand. The hand was the next moment laid upon her head, and then she was drawn for one moment close—very close, and Lady Delaunay's lips were on her brow, and her voice whispered, 'Rest in the Lord—*He* shall give thee thy heart's desire!'

It was their last adieu; a kind pressure of Mr. Powys's strong hand—a wild clasp of Walter's arms, that would have ended in a roar, if she had not by a tremendous effort hurried him away—a confusion of voices, of sounds, of feelings unutterably sweet and bitter; so blended she could not tell them apart—and they were gone. And what happened immediately afterwards, she never knew, for the world seemed to pass away from her with them.

CHAPTER XIV.

My boy, my Arthur, my fair son !
 My life, my joy, my food, my all the world !
 My widow-comfort, and my sorrows' cure !

SHAKESPEARE.

MISS CONWAY had a relation, on her mother's side—a widow lady with a small fortune and large family, who came regularly to town for the best part of the season, as a duty to society for which no subsequent sacrifice could be too great. She was always looked upon as an excellent manager of her income, and of her daughters' interests ; and had certainly succeeded in marrying two of the latter, and making the former do a great deal more service than many three times as large. She never hesitated to give it as her firm conviction that money was the first object in life ; she had no objection to others differing from her in opinion ; they might be right, and she might be wrong, but that, she confessed, was the result of her long experience. As Lady Delaunay had rather a different estimate of life and its duties, there had always existed a quiet, polite, well-understood aversion between her and Mrs. Knighton ; and Miss Conway, though her aunt never interfered with her visits, was very chary of them in general. This May,

however, her relations had not been long established in their fashionable apartments, before Mrs. Marsden's carriage set her down at their door, in time for luncheon; and her reception was as cordial as if they had always been accustomed to intimacy.

'This is charming, Charlotte!' said Mrs. Knighton, herself a good-looking, well-dressed personage, with a face skilled in wearing as cheerful an aspect, as if she had no unmarried daughters, and a purse as ample as her wishes; 'this is delightful! I was just longing for you to come in and tell us all we are dying to know. Is your aunt in town?'

'No, she is in Paris.'

'Paris? True, so you wrote me word, now I remember. And you are on guard in Bryanstone Square, dutiful child. You have it all your own way there, I imagine; so virtue brings its own reward.'

'We are excellent friends, and do not interfere too much with each other.'

'Your excellent friendship would not last long if you did, my dear; but, between ourselves, it must be rather a dull life. I hope you mean to indulge *us* with a little of your spare time this year, till Lady Delaunay returns to monopolize it all. What on earth has taken her to Paris just now? for I have only a confused idea of the whole story.'

'You heard all about Delaunay's exploit and narrow escape, of course.'

'I saw the account in the papers, and there was something afterwards about all the gentlemen receiving medals, was there not? Quite a new step for that good, lazy man to become a hero; I really never expected it of him.'

‘I think no one was less prepared for it than himself,’ said Miss Conway, smiling; ‘meanwhile the consequences are likely to be serious. He begged his mother to meet him at Dover, and she hurried there, and waited week after week, as she would have waited for no one else; and at last heard that he had fallen in with friends who were going on to Paris, and go with them he must, and his mother must join him, for reasons many and cogent. So to Paris she went, and there she is still, and will remain, no doubt, as long as he pleases.’

‘You make me really curious; what might be one of these weighty reasons? Is it permitted to inquire?’

‘Do you know the Camerons?’

The question was superfluous, for Mrs. Knighton knew everybody.

‘To be sure; I liked poor Lady Emily very much. I see Sir Duncan is come home at last to take care of his daughters, and high time too. You smile—you don’t mean there has been anything going on there—really? Not the eldest—not Frances, surely?’

‘Frances herself. Delaunay rather admired her last year, but she never encouraged him in the least; however, his bravery made him appear in a new and more interesting light, I suppose. At any rate they became friends somewhere in their travels, and in short, Lady Delaunay found she was to pronounce judgment, and seems to be well satisfied; so there will not be much to wait for, though nothing is officially announced as yet.’

‘Upon my word, Miss Cameron has managed well. It is very odd how worldly-wise those very good young ladies always prove in the end. I wonder if the

hero would have been as irresistible without the coronet and fortune. She has not much of the last herself, I know ; but your aunt will not mind that. She is quite after her own heart ; one of the new-pattern saints, who, twenty years ago, would have worn a poke bonnet, and made soup and flannel petticoats for old women, and collected pence for the missionaries ; but as that is old-fashioned, she goes to church on saints' days, and illuminates missals, and all that sort of thing. Poor dear Lord Delaunay ! His mother has let him go his own quiet way so long, what will he do with a stirring, energetic wife ? You know she is said to have been quite a mother to her sisters after poor Lady Emily's death ; and of all terrible things for an easy, indolent man, is one of your wonderfully 'useful young lady managers, who will insist on keeping the world in order, as if nothing went right before they were born. Not that any of my girls will ever trouble anybody in that way ; for they never know the price of a single thing but the gloves they lose at Ascot.'

The announcement of luncheon interrupted the conversation at this point, and it was not resumed till Miss Conway was alone with her friend in her dressing-room before taking leave.

'I wanted to ask something more particularly,' said Mrs. Knighton ; 'but before the girls and the servants, I thought it better to wait. What was that I heard about your cousin's meeting with her mother ? Is the *mésalliance* to be pardoned after all ?'

'I can hardly tell how it will end. My aunt was laid up in the country, at the house of Adelaide's father-in-law, and among them they worked upon her feelings, and she had no choice but to relax ;

not in favour of Adelaide, so much as of her little boy, whom she brought away with her, and will, I suppose, provide for.'

'Do you mean that his mother has given him up to her entirely?'

'That is just what I asked her when I last wrote, and all the reply she makes is, that whatever her mother wishes is to be done. Hunger will tame a lion, they say; and certainly the discomfort and wretchedness of her present life have marvellously tamed *her*, if this lasts.'

'Really, I think she is very sensible about it; it is securing a provision for the child, and getting a hold on Lady Delaunay at the same time. It shows more prudence than I should have expected from a lady who made such a mistake in life as hers. But what are those Lyndons like? Are any of them presentable?'

'Hardly, I should say, from one specimen I have seen.'

'What *will* your aunt do with them? They will be a perpetual thorn in her side.'

'Just what I have thought all along, and think still,' said Miss Conway; 'but it cannot be helped.'

'My dear, Lady Delaunay will never bear it; charitable ladies, who can be sisters and mothers of charity to their pensioners, dislike that sort of people quite as much as we wicked, worldly folks, who pretend to nothing of the kind. She and her daughter will quarrel in a week; unless, indeed, Lady Adelaide has become a model of saintly temper, which no Chester ever was yet. If she is wise, she will not let her pride stand in her way; for, of course, her mother will have a good deal to leave.'

‘Not so much as you would suppose. Churches and charities have consumed a great deal of her fortune.’

‘Ah, that is a dreadfully expensive mania, that I never can see the use of. Why good people are to ruin themselves and their belongings to build all these churches, when we have more now than we want, and plenty of Dissenting chapels into the bargain, is quite beyond my comprehension ; but it is the fashion now, and people will do it, just as if what was enough for our grandfathers would not be enough for us. But I hope, my dear Charlotte, out of all this, *your* claims have not been forgotten ?’

‘My claims ? Dear Mrs. Knighton, what have I to expect beyond a remembrance, that I wish I may never receive ?’

‘Of course, my dear, we all feel that ; but I do not know who has, if you have not. You seem to do pretty well what you like in Bryanstone Square, already. I would wager something very handsome, if I could afford it, that you are all right in *that* quarter, and know it. Do give some charming parties when you come into your fortune. That house only wants new furnishing.’

‘How can you talk so, dearest Mrs. Knighton ? I only wish I saw a prospect of ever making some return for all the kindnesses you have shown me, I am sure. There is three o’clock striking ; I really must go, and with all you have to do, I know you will not be sorry.’

‘Since you say that, I will not let you go at all, unless you promise to devote yourself to us a little more than you ever have done yet. Go with us to the Botanical Gardens to-morrow. We will not mind dear Lady Delaunay. I know, in a civil, parliamentary way, she hates the very sight of me, but I won’t poison your

fresh young innocence more than is absolutely necessary. I am quite sure, by the way, that my guess is a shrewd one.'

Miss Conway laughed, and turned the subject, and after an amicable arrangement had been agreed upon as to time and place, and other plans for meeting, she departed. Mrs. Knighton glanced from the window as she drove off in Mrs. Marsden's carriage, which had come to fetch her according to her orders, and shook her head with a sagacious smile.

'Take my word for it,' she said to her daughters, 'Charlotte Conway is to be Mrs. Marsden's heiress. I know it by her manner. My dears, we must contrive this season to see as much of her as possible: she has sense and tact enough to make it a very desirable intimacy for you. I will call on the poor old lady forthwith. It would be a very convenient thing to have that house to put up at sometimes, though it is a long way off: for these expensive quarters grow dearer every year. One must keep up with the times, but it costs a great deal of money.'

There had been a crisis in Miss Conway's life, when the revulsion of feeling from dread to relief, had well nigh won her to resolve on a different course—on ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well, if only to protect herself from such another interval of misery. This was, when she first heard of the exploit of Lord Delaunay and Maurice Randolph: and by the thrill of comfort in knowing she had, after all, injured neither, first realized what she had been enduring, and how narrowly she had escaped. The mercy was so great, so undeserved, it seemed to claim a return; and an

impulse, that had she yielded to, might have redeemed her whole moral being, urged her now, before it was too late, to throw off the long-accumulated load of deceit and wrong, and bear the shame for the sake of the peace of confession and atonement. But it was resisted—and as always follows on such resistance, the evil grew harder than before. Her hatred of Maurice Randolph had become as intense as her affection had once been, and added tenfold to the bitterness with which she regarded her rival. Never should they stand triumphantly by, looking on, while she lay in the dust—never! She was too strong for them yet, and they should find her so. She stood so deeply committed in hostility, that it was now war to the knife, and there was nothing she was not prepared to brave and to do, when she thought of her own passionate appeal, and his parting look of contempt.

With regard to the position of affairs between Lady Delaunay and Adelaide, she had been inclined to believe from the first that, sooner or later, they must come together. Even when the latter was left behind at Cannymoor, she only considered it in the light of a reprieve. Her aunt's manner during the short time they were together, on her way through town, had made her uneasy: she seemed to dread asking questions, as if her trust had been shaken against her will; and actually did put some that had required all her presence of mind to answer. Besides, she had told her at parting, that there were subjects which she meant to talk over with her on her return—subjects that concerned the happiness of them all: and though her tenderness was perhaps warmer than usual, as if her very doubts showed her how dear her niece had become,

Miss Conway's conscience was too well-informed not to find this an unsatisfactory matter for cogitation. But she had great faith in delay, and her own fertility of resource, that had never failed her yet, as well as in the good fortune that, more or less, generally attended her devices.

The present state of things seemed to justify her confidence. Randolph was disabled from interference; Delaunay, though he had written one short vehement remonstrance, that had looked as if he meant to take vigorous measures, seemed to have forgotten all about it, and be absorbed in his own private matters; Adelaide was undergoing a trial of patience which did not look encouraging for the future, even if it should end in her being received at home, as a repentant prodigal, dependent on the bounty of those who had so long neglected her. It would require little skill to foresee, that out of such a reconciliation would spring up bitterness enough to prevent any alarm on the score of her influence, had Miss Conway possessed no other secret source of satisfaction. As it was, she could calmly speculate on the result, confident that her own interests were beyond its control. Mrs. Knighton's knowledge of the world and of worldly physiognomies, had not deceived her. In the course of some of her indefatigable, but wary researches after the third packet of letters, Miss Conway had discovered a will, in which Mrs. Marsden left her residuary legatee; and as her income was large, and she had never spent a third of it, the succession appeared noble enough to afford solid and satisfactory comfort, strengthening her mind for everything else that might befall.

Mrs. Marsden was alone when she entered, sitting in the half-dozing attitude in which she now passed most of the day. She was much weaker and much more infirm than she had been, and seemed to take less heed of what went on round her. Miss Conway truly said they did not interfere with each other; for she seldom opposed anything she did, allowing her guest to control her household, and use her carriage as she pleased; and rarely alluding to family matters. People said she was breaking fast; Miss Conway thought so herself, but as there was nothing particular to describe, she saw no reason for not writing cheerfully to Lady Delaunay on the subject. There was no use in making her dear aunt uneasy before there was absolute necessity; and till Mrs. Marsden complained, what could anybody do? So she kept the house, and employed her carriage and servants, and was affectionate and attentive when they were together, but saw no occasion for shutting herself up with her all day; it would only be harassing to them both. This morning she had been absent longer than usual, and came in with a smile of apology, which changed into surprise at the sharp manner with which her old friend turned round to ask, 'Why do you let that old gentleman come calling here on me? I don't like him, and don't want him. He is a low-bred, busy man, who talks a deal of stuff about what doesn't concern him, and I won't have him coming any more.'

'Who *do* you mean, dear Mrs. Marsden?'

'That Mr. Spindler, from Cannymoor.'

'Has he called again? Dear me, I am sorry you were annoyed. I have tried to be civil to him as poor Adelaide's friend, but he *is* tiresome.'

‘Tiresome? Ada ought to know better than to choose such friends, and you may tell her so. I won’t have any of them coming near me, I know that.’

‘You are quite right, dear ; and I will take care they do not.’

A few days after, Lady Adelaide Lyndon received one of her cousin’s kind, friendly letters, in which, after expressing her satisfaction that from all accounts little Walter was thoroughly contented and happy with his grandmamma, she observed, ‘You are really a *model* mother, to be able to give him up so quietly, and I admire you more than I can say ; for after all, his interests are the first consideration, and as it is only romance to expect boys to care for nobody but their mammas all their lives, you could not have untied the pet apron-string in a safer manner. I do not think *I* could bear it as you do ; but you are wiser than I am in some things. By the way, your old friend, Mr. Spindler, has been very attentive in calling lately ; and as your friend, I have made a point of receiving him civilly ; but poor dear Mrs. Marsden, who, like all old people, gets fanciful and querulous at times, took a dislike to something in his manner, and desired me to tell you she would not have your friends coming to tease her any more. You know her way, and that she does not always mean all she says, poor thing ; but I am bound to give my message, and hope you will excuse it. I did my best to make amends ; for, meeting the gentleman in the Botanical Gardens next day, I introduced him to the Knightons (who ask very kindly after you), and both as your friend, and as a wealthy old bachelor, they were quite ready to accept the acquaintance, and have invited him to their next party.’

No reply was made to this letter ; Lady Adelaide for once justified the praise bestowed on her wisdom. It was however alluded to, in one written to Mrs. Henry Lyndon about this time, from which we give some extracts.

‘ . . . I took Henry’s advice, tell him, and put it in the fire unanswered. As he was so angry with me for neglecting his other warning, I hope he will give me credit for this. If he should see Mr. Powys, perhaps he would ask him to explain how entirely Mr. Spindler’s intrusion is without my sanction. I did not even know of it, till informed by my cousin of the use he had made of my name.

‘ As far as I am personally concerned, I trust Henry’s fears about that gentleman’s intentions are misplaced. My father has assured me again and again that I am safe, and I must believe him. As for regretting my imprudence, I can hardly do that, while he tells me it saved his senses—perhaps his life. We think him sadly broken and out of health—painfully irritable sometimes, no doubt from pressure on the brain ; so that poor Penelope’s patience is a good deal tried, and we are all obliged to combine for his amusement as much as possible, and avoid matters of business altogether. It would be a satisfaction to know how we stand, and if necessary, make sacrifices—anything rather than suspense and anxiety ; but he will explain nothing, and allows no questions to be asked—only tells me so often he has taken care of my interests, I should be ashamed to add to his troubles by fears about myself.

‘ You ask how my spirits have kept up. I can only

say I am sometimes a wonder to myself; but I believe it is partly owing to my having too much to do to think about my own wants and wishes as much as I did. There has been a good deal of sickness in the village, and some of our hard-working ladies have been laid up; so that *faute de mieux*, I have been entrusted with some of their labour. This, added to the necessary duties at home, and the supervision of my two maidens at the Rectory, who are improving visibly, but require looking after, keeps me tolerably well occupied all day. If I ever grow desponding, it is at night; but it is so ungrateful to give way to this, after all I have received, that I do my best to resist, and when sleep is impossible, take refuge in a book.

‘Dr. Home has heard at last from Mr. Randolph; he was progressing favourably, though still a sufferer from rheumatic pains, and too weak for much exertion. His young French friend’s mother and sisters were the kindest of nurses, but inexorable in their discipline, and would only allow him ten minutes’ use of his pen. How thankful I am that he is recovering, I cannot express. By the time he returns, I hope my brother will be in England, and that all will then be cleared up and explained between them. My mother, I know, will not rest till that is done, and on her I rely.

‘My darling boy is very good about writing, and seems so well and happy, that I try to feel glad he is away while Cannymoore is in this sickly state. I enclose you his last letter, and if you criticise it, take care how you show me my little playmate’s correspondence, when you are separated for the first time. I do not covet the trial for you. How long ours is to last, I dare not think. I try not to count the days, or to

indulge visionary hopes, as they only make the delay more difficult to bear.

‘Mrs. Dalton has taken the large cottage next to the Balls, which was vacant by old Phillips’s death; and has devoted herself to preparing a kind of refuge for vagrant children. She has already found four or five, with the help of Abner, and Sergeant Wade, who takes wonderful interest in the enterprise, and will, I think, prove of great service in its ultimate success. She lodges, boards, clothes, and teaches the children, and looks happier since she has had such an occupation. Her own little grandchild was baptized last Sunday, and the sergeant was present. He goes regularly to church now, whenever it is open; and often basks in the sun in the churchyard, especially when Mr. Ousel is practising on the organ, who is very good to him, and plays what he finds pleases him best, instead of his own more scientific studies. I am afraid, in strictest confidence, it is done partly to please me; but it gives the old man so much comfort, I cannot afford to quarrel with the young one.

‘My mother’s presents have given universal satisfaction *here*. I am very glad you were pleased with yours. It came from a heart that can appreciate you, and whose gratitude and esteem you richly deserve.’

The presents alluded to had been sent over from Paris, and were tasteful, appropriate, and well chosen; the value disguised beneath the elegance, so as to avoid all appearance of more munificence than was consistent with respect. Penelope wrote in rapturous praise of the manner in which they had all been remembered, and the charming letter that accompanied the gifts.

It was the pleasantest topic she had to discuss, for she took a more gloomy view of things than Adelaide, and was severely shaken by the state of her father's mind, and the dread of what might be coming upon them all. She owned that it was so, and what they should have done lately without Adelaide, nobody could tell. Adelaide was the comfort of the whole house, and of the village into the bargain; always thinking what she could do for everybody but herself; making time for everything; so sweet-tempered with her father, such a help in the accounts and house-keeping, so pleasant to all the neighbours; nobody would believe she could be the same person. She had declined being one of the committee at present, but did all the work of those who were laid up; and when old Mrs. Grayling was confined to her room, went every day to read her favourite novels to her, and the dear old soul had talked of nothing else ever since. She said, the tone of her ladyship's voice, when she read the *dénouement* scene in *Rotten Row*, where Prince Stromboli turned out to be the long-lost brother of Lord Montague de Courcy, was enough to melt a heart of stone. 'My only fear is,' Miss Lyndon added, 'that like all energetic people, now she has begun, she will over-do her usefulness, and work herself into another fever. She takes long walks with Miss Brittan and Sophy; and these I encourage, as they do her good, though I am afraid she is teaching half the time; for they have caught the mania for making collections of nobody knows what, and come home with baskets full of rubbish, which I take good care shall pass on to the Rectory. Dr. Home has been so occupied among his people, the girls have rather

become a responsibility to Adelaide, but she never seems to mind it.'

Among the families who suffered from the prevalent sickness was that of Mrs. Ball, who had one after another laid up, till she was nearly laid up herself. The baby, in particular, had a hard struggle for its little life, and a message sent in despair to the Rectory, to know if the good gentleman had left any of his wonderful stuff behind him, reaching it when Lady Adelaide was there, led to her going at once, to see if she could be of any use. Whether it was owing to her remedies, or to her visits, she never presumed to say, but the child *did* recover, and she had the credit of it; and her popularity, which had been on the rise some little time, was established at once on the highest pinnacle. She might have prescribed nose of Turk and Tartar's lips, and they would have been taken with enthusiasm three times a day; but she infinitely preferred kitchen medicine where it was available; and a drop of soup, or a bit of chicken, brought by my lady's own hands, was found to have wonderful effect in rebuilding a shattered constitution. Lady Adelaide had so completely repudiated her old theory, that she had nothing to do with the people, nor they with her—that when taxed with it by the old rector, she stood out that she had never said anything of the kind, and maintained it in defiance of all argument.

How much she suffered in her solitary moments during this period—how often, as day after day, week after week, went by, the hope deferred made her heart sick with longing; that hope she had secretly cherished almost unawares, of the spell her boy's winning face would work in obtaining her speedy and complete

reconciliation—no one knew ; it was a subject on which she would bear no question. Its only trace was in her kindness to Lilla Brittan, as if she felt her to be a link with her mother, and a pledge of her love ; but no one ever heard a murmur, or saw her shed a tear.

After a long continuance of the dry wind that had been charged with being the main cause of the epidemic in Cannymoor, there came a sudden change to heavy rains, with very little intermission, causing floods in some parts of the country, and raising a cloud of those cheerful prognostications for the future, wherein the national mind takes so much delight—whether they concern corn, fruit, or grass. It might have been any month but May, when one evening, towards the end of it, the party at the Manorhouse were surprised by a visit from Mr. Ousel ; an honour rather sparingly bestowed, and by no means looked for on so wet a night. Mr. Lyndon, who had been in one of his moods of silent gloom all day, received him so indifferently, the ladies were perforce obliged to be more hospitable than usual. He seemed in a state of considerable excitement, and nervously unable to give it vent ; and it was not till Lady Adelaide, taking pity upon him for the sake of past services, had gradually talked him into feeling more at ease, that he ventured to open the matter on which he had come.

Did she know that those cottages on the moor, Wade's and others, where she visited so kindly, had been offered for sale, and that Mr. Spindler had been negotiating the purchase, that he might pull them all down ?

'Indeed,' she said, with a sorrowful smile, 'I did

hear of it ; for the sergeant thought I might be able to prevent it, which is quite out of the question.'

'Perhaps you are aware that it is all part—that it formerly belonged to this estate?'

'Well, sir, what of that?' asked Mr. Lyndon, turning sharply. He had not heeded the first remark, but this roused him directly.

'Only, sir, that—that—that might account for Mr. Spindler's being so anxious to secure it.'

Mr. Lyndon sighed heavily, threw himself back in his chair, and relapsed into silence. Lady Adelaide hastened to draw the guest's attention back to herself.

'I have been in great trouble about the poor people,' she said, 'especially Sergeant Wade ; as there seemed to be no thought of showing them any kind of consideration, and they were taking it quite to heart.'

'I know they were, and *that*, I know, would grieve one of such a fibre as yours,' he began softly, but meeting her grave eye, went on in a more commonplace tone ; 'Sergeant Wade told me Mr. Spindler had a grudge against him, and he guessed why ; and that he had sworn he would not have a house in the place made a nest for tramps, like Mrs. Dalton's. He had had proposals about a new public-house, and he meant to build one there.'

'He is just fit to keep it himself,' muttered Mr. Lyndon, 'the precious scoundrel !'

The young man looked a hearty assent to the epithet. It gave him courage to go on.

'I have however ventured, hoping to relieve suspense and anxiety, to call and let you know—in short, I have forestalled Mr. Spindler ; I have completed the purchase

myself to-day. Your poor friends need not be afraid of being turned out just yet, Lady Adelaide.'

'Oh, thank you—thank you!' she said, in a tone of great relief, and with a warm smile of gratitude that made him tingle from head to foot; 'you have brought good news indeed. I am *very* glad.'

The others joined in expressions of satisfaction; only Mr. Lyndon remained silent, his mouth twitching convulsively. The young man glanced at him in nervous anxiety, and went on, in some agitation of voice, 'It is only right I should explain; it is not on my own account entirely—I am authorized by a friend. He was sure this man wanted to buy up all the property that he could, and I promised in his absence to prevent it, if possible. His object and mine are identical—simply to hold the property as a trust till Mr. Lyndon or his natural heir is disposed to redeem it; and any terms the Squire might like to suggest, I am sure there would not be a moment's hesitation—'

Mr. Lyndon burst in on the faltering speech with a vehemence that startled them all. 'Young man, you might as well expect me to offer terms for the crown of England! It is mockery, insult, to talk to me of redeeming the estate now; it will all be his sooner or later, and then he will be content.'

He covered his face with his hands, and his daughters were terrified to hear his deep, passionate sobs. Penelope went up to him, trying to soothe him by caresses, and Mr. Ousel hastily rose to retire. Lady Adelaide, who felt something to be due for his courtesy, attended him to the door with gentle expressions of gratitude and apology; her father's health must be their excuse; she was sure his own kindness of heart would prompt

him not to mention to any one what he had witnessed. He held the hand she offered with a lingering grasp, and felt he could have stood there for ever.

‘Do you remember,’ he whispered hurriedly, ‘a warning I once gave you? I see you do. It may be coming true sooner than you thought. If it does, if you find vulgar persecution carried beyond your patience, give him *this* ;’ he put a sealed letter with a blank envelope into her hand. ‘It will silence him, at any rate. Nay, you may trust me,’ he added, with a rather piteous smile, observing her reluctance to receive so mysterious a document ; ‘it is only Piercie Shafton’s bodkin, but it will thrust home : keep it by you against an emergency. Oh, Lady Adelaide—’ he bent over her hand as if he longed to press it to his lips, ‘if I could only serve you in any way—if I might—if *money*—’

Her look silenced him—he dropped her hand, bowed, and rushed out into the driving rain.

She was glad her sisters were too much engaged to notice or comment on this confidential colloquy, and put the letter aside for the present, half vexed that she had taken it, and resolved to return it next day. Her attention was now called to her father’s condition, which dismayed her not a little. His agitation was evidently the result of suppressed suffering, and when he mustered resolution to meet her eye, the despair in his own chilled her with dread. Henry’s warnings—Penelope’s anxiety—if they were well founded, after all, and he had deceived himself and her—what was to be done? But there was no time to think of her own difficulties : he must be soothed and quieted, or his night’s rest was gone ; and they had just succeeded, at last, in restoring him to some degree of composure,

when a violent ring at the bell, and then a hasty step in the hall, announced another visitor. By instinct all knew who this was, before Mr. Spindler was announced.'

Latterly, whenever this gentleman had favoured them with his company, he had shown a great disposition to be more patronizing to the ladies than they thought at all necessary or agreeable, but as it only took the form of over-civility, it afforded no tangible matter for complaint. But this evening they could see at a glance there would be no offence given in that shape: he could hardly master his rage sufficiently to exchange a word of greeting, and as he took his seat, his muddy boots and splashed dress (for which he offered no apology) suited well with the sullen glare of hostility with which his eyes moved slowly round the circle, resting with the most emphatic determination on the Squire and his son's widow.

'You have had a visitor before me, I think?' was his first remark.

'Yes,' retorted Penelope, whom the dirty boots had affronted considerably; 'I cannot imagine what the pleasure can be of making calls in such weather, and so late: but if people will catch cold, it is their own fault. I am afraid, Mr. Spindler, your feet must be wet?'

'No fear of that—soles an inch thick, with plenty of nails: no foolish dancing pumps for me, thank ye, Miss Lyndon. I leave that for Ousel. So he must needs spoil my market, must he?—that is to say, he and Randolph; for it has been a regular planned thing between them, I find; and this young fellow has taken up a tone with me that I won't stand, any more than I

will his spyings and meddling. I won't indeed. I only *hope* his new purchase may prove a good speculation. If he parts with it, I recommend him to take care who is the next purchaser, that's all—since he is so sharp and clever at a bargain. Now, Mr. Lyndon, I never talk business before ladies if I can help it, but I suppose there are no secrets here. I am come to ask you—'

'Ring the bell, Lucy,' interrupted her father, hurriedly; 'and just go and order the lamp to be lighted in my study. I will talk to Mr. Spindler there.'

'It is much the same to me, my dear fellow, where we talk,' said the visitor, as Lucy hastened to obey, 'so long as the matter is thoroughly understood. You know the term is expired, and, of course, are ready.'

'If you will have a moment's patience, I will attend to you as soon as we are alone.'

'Begging your pardon, it strikes me that so plain a remark could be answered one way or another, without all this ceremony. But I see what it is—you want to put me off with excuses, and I won't have it!'

'Spindler, this is not the time or the manner in which we are accustomed to transact business. I am not well to-night, and to be spoken to like this—if you would call to-morrow morning—'

'I'll do nothing of the kind. That young fellow has chosen to thwart me to please you, and so you may take the consequences.'

'You will remember the presence of my daughters, sir, I trust.'

'I do, and I speak out before them on purpose, because they ought to know. It is nonsense and folly, Mr. Lyndon, your trying to put off the evil day as you

do. If you were wise enough and man enough to look properly into your affairs, and put them into order in the only way left to you, there might be a chance ; but you won't—you cling to the empty show of being the Squire as long as you can, and borrow here and borrow there, with all your capital swallowed up and sunk nobody knows how or where, because you *would* take no advice but your own ; and what is the consequence ? Why, the house will soon be sold over your head, and I shall buy it, and be master here, as I ought to be ; and what will you do ? Yes, you may look as savage as you please ; it is no fault of mine. I showed you and my Lady Adelaide your condition some time ago, and proposed—'

'Have done, sir, this minute !' cried Mr. Lyndon, starting up, his face scarlet, and his frame quivering ; 'one word more of this insulting language, and I will—I will—'

He gasped for breath—reeled—caught and supported himself against the table—and a torrent of blood gushed from his nostrils. All was confusion in a moment ; and before Mr. Spindler was aware, a light firm hand was laid upon his arm, and he was conducted outside the door.

'Go into the study, sir,' said Lady Adelaide, in a voice he durst not disobey ; 'and I will come to you.'

She hastened back to Mr. Lyndon ; the flow of blood had already relieved his brain, but it was some little time before it could be stopped, and he was too faint for any exertion. He caught his daughter-in-law's hand, however, and pressed it earnestly, while his lips murmured something like an entreaty for pardon. She

bent over him, with a calmness that helped to restore his own.

‘You need not speak, only give a sign. You cannot pay the bond, I see; will you give me full permission to act as I think best?’

He laid his hand on her head, and whispered, ‘Whatever you will, only do not sacrifice yourself.’ She smiled and left the room. In rather less than half-an-hour they heard the hall door shut, and she returned alone. Mr. Lyndon partly rose from the sofa to read her face; it betrayed nothing, except by a slight glow on the cheeks; and when he began to reproach himself, she checked him with a gentle caress.

‘Hush, there is nothing for me to forgive; only try and listen to me quietly. I have already done all that I could to help you, except one thing—my last resource. If this fails, I can do no more, and we must face the worst bravely; but till it has been tried, we may hope for the best. All I ask is for you to keep yourself composed, for all our sakes; or you will take away our strength just when we want it most.’

He felt the force of this appeal, and yielded to their united persuasions to go to bed at once, on condition they would all do the same. His sanguine temper had already built a tower of hopes on the one she had held out; and feeling easier, though much exhausted, he felt sure he should sleep better than he had done for a fortnight.

Not till he *was* asleep, however, could his anxious daughters rest; and in a long confidential conversation, Penelope and Adelaide talked the whole matter over, and prepared each other for what they feared might ensue. What had passed with Mr. Spindler, Adelaide

could hardly bear to repeat: her scornful smile on a trembling lip told its own tale. He had been insolent—that he always was—and even threatening; and what was worse, had still persisted in his professions of personal admiration, formally renewing his old proposals, with the alternative of letting the law take its course.

‘Well?’ asked Miss Lyndon, finding her pause.

‘Well, it may seem unworthy of me, but I declined giving a final answer, and obtained a week’s respite for deliberation.’

‘And what will deliberation do for you, my poor sister?’

‘It gives me time, Penelope; and in your father’s state, that is worth something, even if my last resource fails.’

‘What is that resource? Not Mr. Randolph again?’

‘Could you suppose it for a moment? But no—do not ask me until it has been tried, or my courage may fail. It will require all I have.’

Penelope held her hand fast, as she was moving towards her own room, and looked earnestly in her face.

‘It seems very hard you should have all our troubles as well as your own on your shoulders. I am afraid, do you know, it was a bad bargain for you coming among us at all!’

‘Penelope, you received me, welcomed me, shared all you had with me, when my own stood afar off; and I repaid you very ill, and did nothing to make you happier; but I was so unhappy myself. If you can forgive all the trouble I gave you then——’

Her sister-in-law’s hearty kiss broke off the sentence.

‘There were faults on both sides, and mine were the worst, for I was old enough to know better. You are much better looking than I am, and when you like, can be twice as agreeable; and the long and short of the matter was, I was jealous of you. There—it’s out at last. I made your life miserable—I know I did; and I often said things of you in a pet, that I was sorry for afterwards, and am still more sorry now. It has been on my mind some time, and I can keep it no longer; but I am afraid I spoke ill-naturedly about you to Mr. Randolph the first night he was here; you had put me out by your manner, and I thought you were showing off before him how you despised all of us, and I felt spiteful, and said a great deal I had better have let alone, for I know now it was exaggerated. While we are talking of forgiving, will you forgive *that*?’

It required a little magnanimity; but though Adelaide could not find voice to answer, her sisterly kiss was warm and sincere, and they separated, each feeling the better for the voluntary act of self-abasement: though neither was aware that this eventful night would be the last, for many weeks, they would pass under the same roof.

Adelaide, when she found herself alone, sat down and trembled in every limb. Penelope’s acknowledgment had suddenly dispelled a shadow that had darkened her spirit ever since that evening. If, indeed, all the petty, ill-natured remarks to which she had been so long inured as hardly to notice them, were repeated to him as a stranger, no wonder that before he had time to investigate their truth, or trace their origin, or weigh their value, he had hastily judged her on their evidence, and despised her too much to pity.

It was that which gave the reproachful sting to his words, and the severity to his looks, which had struck her down in her pride like a sword-blow. Yes, and the more he loved her, the more bitter must his scorn have been. Surely, he had learned to judge more mildly now, or he would not have written as he did. He must have discovered that, with all her faults, she was not what he thought her *then*, when he spoke of a change over heart and nature, more terrible to witness than decay and death! Ah, if he only knew her position *now*—if he, who loved her so devotedly, could but have seen her that evening, compelled to endure with calmness the insult of that man's presence, and having no hope of escape from merciless persecution, but by doing what she was about to do, and would have given anything to avoid—appealing for help to the compassion of her mother!

Yes—that was her last resource, and for Mr. Lyndon's sake, she must try it. It was one more humiliation, one more draught of bitterness—but it must be borne—drained to the dregs; it might give a handle to misrepresentation, and throw discredit on the sincerity of her repentance; but she had no other hope left, and after fortifying herself by prayer, she sat resolutely down, and wrote a full, unreserved statement of the whole affair, as far as she knew it, to Lady Delaunay—throwing herself on her generosity.

'You have urged me to show you confidence,' she added, in conclusion. 'I thought in giving you my boy I had done my utmost: I now do more—I put into your hands the name, the honour, the very existence of his father's house, which I have gone beyond the bounds of prudence to save in vain, and in

whose ruin we must all sink together, without your help. If you knew what it cost me to appeal to you, you would form some idea of the magnitude of the peril that goads me on. Were Mr. Lyndon's health and mind in a less fearfully precarious state, I should not do it even now ; but his very life trembles in the scale, and I have no resource left but in that magnanimity—which, even if you cannot comply with my petition, will prevent your misconstruing its motives.'

It was late before she closed this letter ; for it took her very long to write, and more than once, her heart grew so sick in doing it, she had to pause, and walk up and down the room to recover. The rain dashed against her window, and a branch of a creeping rose, buffeted by the storm, beat wildly with dripping leaves upon the pane, like a weeping suppliant at an inexorable door. But within the house all had been for some time at rest, except herself ; and she, at last, laid her head on her pillow, and slept heavily, as worn-out nature sleeps, and yet even then, oppressed by the images of the cares that harassed her waking.

That battered spray of the rose, which had seemed so true an emblem of her own state, haunted her in her dreams, seeming now like a spirit's beckoning hand—now the face of a friend who died when she was a child—now the malicious grin of Mr. Spindler, as he had quitted her that night ;—now, laughing and joyous, with the raindrops glittering in his flying curls, her boy Walter, triumphantly repeating what she had once heard him mutter in a dream of his own, 'Never fear, mamma—*Pull* pull you up !'

There was a sudden light in her room ; her eyes

opened. Penelope was standing by the bed, a paper in one hand, and a candle in the other; her face deadly pale, and bathed in tears that she was trying hard to stop or hide.

‘Oh my dear, dear Adelaide! You must get up directly. I am so sorry for you—and such a night too! Read this.’

And she held the light, while Adelaide’s trembling hands unfolded the telegraphic missive, that daunts the heart of the most intrepid:—‘The station master at Lilford is requested to send a carriage and four express to Cannymoor Manorhouse, to bring back Lady Adelaide Lyndon. Her son is ill in London.’

Lady Adelaide read, laid it down, and looked up. ‘Does my father know?’ she asked, with strange quietness.

‘No; there is not a sound in his room; only Lucy and I were awake by the bell.’

‘Then do not let him be disturbed. You can tell him in the morning. What o’clock is it?’ She had risen while she spoke, and was dressing rapidly, yet with no outward signs of agitation.

‘Just two; quite dark still. The postboys say they have had great difficulty in getting here, the waters are so much out; and they will be obliged to return by another road. Is there anything I can do to help you?’

A shake of the head was the only reply, so Miss Lyndon asked no more, but hurried off to give as many orders and directions as possible, by way of relief. When she came back, Adelaide’s small portmanteau was packed, and she was kneeling with her head bowed in her hands. Her sister stood in reverential

pity, waiting till she rose; but when she did so, and turned her pale, mournful face, and tearless eyes that seemed to gaze without seeing, Penelope's firmness gave way; she rushed forwards, and clasped her close, sobbing out her sympathy, and her hopes of all ending well.

'Yes, dear, yes,' she added, seeing Adelaide's eyes wander wistfully round the room, as if she was trying to recollect some last request she had to make; 'I will take care of everything; no one shall come near the room but myself, and not a thing shall be moved out of its place, I promise you. I fully expect we shall soon have you both back again, unless they like you too well to part with you, and then we shall have to come after *you*. Those keys? yes, I will keep them safe, all right; and look here, I insist on your taking my leather bag that Emma gave me—it will hold all your odds and ends, all these letters, and everything—there, put on your bonnet and I will pack them all in. You will find it delightfully convenient, and monstrous heavy, but that doesn't matter; it is stocked with everything you can want, and ever so many queer things besides.'

Talking briskly and bustling about, so as to prevent the appearance of being frightened, was, she thought, the only way to keep up Adelaide's spirits. Adelaide hardly seemed to hear; she went on quickly, but mechanically, completing her preparations; but when her sister put the precious leather bag into her hand and begged her, for all their sakes, to try not to be cast down, she looked at her for a moment, with that same dreamy expression in her eyes, as if they were watching something afar away; and

then thanked her, with a smile that nearly broke Miss Lyndon's heart. She took her arm, and led her into the parlour, where Lucy, crying all the while, had got hot coffee ready, and sandwiches and biscuits to be put into her bag, and wraps enough to smother her piled upon all the chairs. Their earnest entreaties made her struggle against the aching in her throat, and try to swallow a small quantity of the beverage so kindly prepared: and then the postboys, who had been partaking of something rather more stimulating, announced that they were ready. One silent embrace—and amid the tears and sobs of mistresses and servants, the widow passed from her husband's home into the darkness and storm without.

As the carriage rattled through the village, more than one ear was startled, and a head or two peered at bedroom window-panes to see the lamps flash past; but one only emerged, thrusting a red night-cap boldly out into the rain. 'Hulloa! hulloa there! postboy! Who is it? What's the matter?'

'Express—Telegraph!' was all the reply. Lady Adelaide caught a glimpse of the face; whether it saw hers, she could not tell, and soon forgot to conjecture. One thought absorbed all besides.

To attempt to penetrate the sanctuary of that lonely suffering, to describe in words how it was endured, would be useless, if it were well to try. She was not alone—that is all we know; and prayer and patience can give to slender frames and quivering nerves the strength that lies silently on the rack, or stands serenely while the flames are rising.

It was a fearful journey, with the gusts of rain that swept across the open country as if it would drown

man and horse, beating into the chaise, in spite of the closed windows—the rather that one was cracked, and the other had a triangular fragment missing ; but what was worse, it was a tedious one ; the road they were compelled to take was long and heavy, and the latter part principally up-hill. The clocks were striking five when they drew up at the Lilford station. It was too early for the first train, but there was a small hotel and livery-stable connected with the railway, from which the post-chaise had been sent ; and Lady Adelaide was shown into the deserted coffee-room, where a sleepy waiter presently made believe—first to light a fire, which persisted in showing nothing but smoke—and then, in a feeble way, to put chairs and tables into something like order. It was still raining heavily, though the wind had fallen since sunrise ; the outer world looked dreary in the extreme, and Lady Adelaide stood over the inhospitable grate, and shivered as if it had been November instead of May. So long as she had been actually in motion, there was some relief from the goading terror of being too late, which, though unacknowledged even to herself, had struck her like a death-blow from the first ; but this waiting was dreadful. She could only murmur, again and again, the petition for help and resignation which had been her impulse at first, and her resource ever since. To suffer her mind to dwell on the images that thrust themselves before it at every instant, would be, she was well aware, to unfit herself for exertion ; and yet, as often as she struggled to rouse herself from despair, and to bring trust and hope to shine on the gloom of her dread, as often the face of her boy would flash upon her, and the agony had all to be renewed.

She walked up and down ; she went out upon the railway platform, as if in faint hope of hurrying the decrees of Bradshaw ; a few workmen and porters were standing about, and her appearance, striking in its elegance, in spite of her well-worn mourning, drew more than one glance of curiosity. A policeman, at last, came up to offer his services, and hearing her story, which was told in very few words, showed a great deal of sympathy ; begged her to go back to the fire, and he would come and attend to her as soon as it was time—and looked as if he really longed to comfort her if he could. His eyes followed her as she went back, and he shook his head significantly.

‘Where be she from?’ asked a workman, with his oil-can in his hand, who had stopped to hear what passed.

‘I can tell you,’ said a porter, who had slipped into the hotel to inquire ; ‘a telegraph came down in the night from London to send for her, because her son is ill ; she is Lady Somebody Something, though she has no servant with her, and only one bit of a portmanteau. I thought she was something out of the common way by her walk.’

‘Poor soul!’ said the policeman, who had sick children of his own ; ‘I was sure she looked as if she had seen better days, and was not made to rough it. I say, mind she has a carriage to herself, if you can manage it ; and let no one go near it to plague her, do you hear?’

The fire had at last begun to justify its name, and Lady Adelaide, as she resumed her seat, found the warmth renovate her chilled frame. The hotel was beginning to show signs of life, and she was offered several civilities ; all of which, however, she declined.

While she was still waiting there, a Shareham chaise dashed up to the station, out of which a little old gentleman, in a brown great coat, sprang hastily, tugged his bag out after him, and was paying in a violent hurry—when one of the postboys who had driven the express, civilly told him he was in very good time, the train was not ready yet. This seemed to calm his spirits considerably, and after brief consideration, he took the postboy aside, and talked to him in a confidential whisper for a few minutes, evidently making a great impression on his auditor. This duty accomplished, he hurried to the platform.

‘Train not starting yet, policeman?’

‘No, sir; not for a quarter of an hour.’

‘All right; I have had a race for it, and was afraid I should be too late. Keep an eye on that bag, will you? Sharpish weather for the end of May? Can one get a drop of anything hot anywhere here?’

‘Yes, sir; first door on the right.’

Mr. Spindler thanked him, and lost no time in availing himself of the opportunity. In the meanwhile, the postboy, to whom he had given the alarm, went in quest of Lady Adelaide to be paid; a demand which disconcerted her not a little, as it had never occurred to her, in the agitation of setting off, to examine the state of her finances; and on taking out her purse, she found she had not much more than was required for her railway ticket. She offered them what she had, promising more as soon as she reached town; but after the hint they had received, ‘to look sharp about getting their money,’ they did not like this at all, and grew very surly. They had driven as hard as they could, were half-drowned with the rain, and their

beasts knocked up, and now they were to be put off like this, and they didn't understand it. She grew nervous and distressed, and they got more than half the contents of her purse; but were hardly gone, when the master of the livery stables, whom the same hint had just reached, came in, full of alarm lest he should have been too hasty in complying with the order from the station-master, and presenting an exorbitant bill for immediate payment. A nervous terror of being detained took away her presence of mind; and her evident distress increased the peremptoriness of her creditor. She assured him Lord Delaunay, whose address she offered to write, would settle immediately on her arrival; he replied, that was all very well, but he had never seen his lordship, and knew nothing about him, and perhaps his lordship might refuse to pay; at any rate, he had had a hint that looked like it, and it would be satisfactory if part of the bill were paid on the spot—that was all. She took out her watch; it was so nearly time to go, that if she waited to appeal to the station-master, she might be too late—anything rather than that. Perhaps if she offered her watch—it was gold—it would be sufficient for the present. The livery-stable keeper looked rather ashamed when she unfastened and put it into his hand. Yes, that was more like business certainly; he didn't mean to be uncivil, only—and with more politeness than he had shown before, he left the room, not quite easy in his own mind that he might not have been making a worse mistake this time than the first. At the door he ran against a tall gentleman, who had been an attentive witness, though unobserved, of the whole transaction. 'Ah, sir, wet morning; Shareham coach, sir, I think? Your place

was taken last night; but there is a return chaise going back, if you prefer it.'

The gentleman made no answer, but beckoned him imperatively aside; and while they were arguing some point in whispers, the policeman came to look for Lady Adelaide and her portmanteau.

'Time to go, ma'am—my lady—but no need to hurry; trust to me. First class, of course?'

'Oh, no,' she said, hurriedly; 'I have not money enough left; I was not prepared for the expense of the express, and as it is, have been obliged to leave my watch. Never mind; only let me go on. It does not matter how.'

'Yes, but it does, ma'am; and I wonder Mr. Dawson is not ashamed of himself—that I do. He'll hear of it, I can tell him that. To be so uncivil to a lady! I never heard of such a thing.'

He took her outside while he said this, called a porter to take her portmanteau (it had been her husband's, and had seen plenty of service), asked her to allow him to get her ticket, and before she knew he was gone, was back again, opening the door of a first-class carriage.

'You'll excuse the liberty I have taken, ma'am—my lady—I hope,' putting the ticket into her hand; 'you can send the rest in a money-order by post whenever you please; but it is not weather for a lady to go second-class, and I only hope you'll get there in time, ma'am, that's all. I know what it is, for I've three on 'em sick at home now.'

She tried to speak, but her voice was choked. She put her pocket-book and pencil into his hand, whispering huskily, 'Your name.' He wrote it at length, 'John Tubbs, C 22, X. Y. Z. Railway.'

'Thank you,' she said, with an effort; 'I shall never forget you. God comfort and bless you in your children.'

Scarcely had she taken her seat, when to her horror she saw Mr. Spindler tearing along the platform; and it flashed across her mind in a moment that he was in search of her. In an agony of fear, such as she had never known in all her perils, she shrank back into her corner, drew down her veil, and held her breath till he had passed—which he did without discovering that the carriage was not empty. The next minute her friend, C 22, came up with a beaming face. 'It's all right, ma'am—my lady; a gentleman who knows you and Lord Delaunay has settled everything with Mr. Dawson, and reprimanded him soundly for his want of civility; and here, my lady, is your watch—and your receipt, too, if you'll please to take them.'

Lady Adelaide was lost in astonishment. Who could this friend be? The policeman could not say; the gentleman had slept there last night, and overheard by accident what had occurred. There was no time now to lose. He had given the guard a hint to look after her ladyship, and, if he could, let her have the carriage to herself as much as possible; and so he wished her a good journey, and walked off, like a good Samaritan as he was, without waiting for any more thanks.

The train moved on soon after, to her great relief, without Mr. Spindler's finding her out. That gentleman, by a little miscalculation of time, had cheated himself out of a great deal of pleasure. In setting the postboys upon the traveller, he had reckoned upon causing her a little distress; and had intended to step

in just in time to enjoy her humiliation, pay her bill, and hand her himself into her place—so insuring her company all the way. A happy provision of railway nature, which keeps all liquids meant for hasty and immediate consumption at boiling point, had just marred this ingenious scheme when success seemed most secure ; and the persecuted lady was, for the present, as safe from his attentions as locked doors could make her.

Once more she was going on, and she felt comforted. Those two unexpected pieces of kindness were strengthening in themselves, and she blessed both her benefactors in her heart, for helping her to remember she was not forsaken or alone. And so she endured till ten o'clock. It was a wearily slow train, stopping at every little station on the line ; but till that hour, no one molested her. At last, however, they reached one where several people were waiting, and there was a rush for places, time being very short. She had seen as they came up, a carriage with a magnificent hammercloth and liveries, setting down a family party ; and these were evidently coming to invade her privacy. So long as she escaped Mr. Spindler, the rest signified but little ; but it did not seem to be so unimportant to *them* ; for the gentleman of the party, an anxious, mild-looking little man, stepped back in great alarm when he saw her, and shook his head as he turned to his daughters. 'It won't do, my dears, it won't do for us ; your mamma insists on having a carriage to herself—to ourselves, I mean. Dear, dear, what shall we do ? Porter ! Guard ! can't you give us a carriage to ourselves ?'

'Plenty of room here, sir : no other empty. Be quick, sir, if you please.'

‘Oh, my dears, my dears ! what will your mamma say ? What shall we do ?’

‘Do, papa ?’ returned a young lady of about seventeen, very fashionably dressed, and with a slightly sharp way of speaking—‘why, get in, of course. What harm will it do us ? We shall be left behind if we don’t ;’ and suiting the action to the word, in she sprang, stumbling against Lady Adelaide, in her haste, and very nearly sending her parasol into her face, but not thinking her a person to whom apology was necessary. There being no remedy forthcoming, the distressed gentleman handed in his three other daughters—then a little boy, who looked sick and fretful, and began quarrelling with all his sisters about where he should sit—and then got in himself, looking the picture of woe. The guard was going to shut the door.

‘Oh, stop, stop—there is another lady coming ! Here she comes.’ And at the word, a very stout, imposing personage, gorgeously arrayed in silk, velvet, lace, and feathers in abundance, came sailing towards the carriage, leading a fat spaniel in a silver chain, and followed by a maid and footman, to whom she continued to pour forth directions and orders, till they were suddenly seized upon by an impatient official, and hurried away to their respective seats. The lady, meanwhile, advanced to the door which the guard still held open. She gave one severe glance at the quiet figure in black, and then another at her lord, which seemed to fulfil his worst anticipations.

‘I *told* you, Mr. P., I wished for an *entire* carriage.’

‘Very sorry, ma’am,’ said the guard, ‘but there is not one to be had. I am afraid we can’t let you take

in the dog, ma'am—it is objected to in general, and when it is—'

'Didn't I tell you so, Mr. P.? And didn't I *beg* and *pray* you to be here in time, that you might secure a carriage to ourselves, properly—so that this poor dear creature might travel in peace and comfort, as she is accustomed to do? But no—nothing would *induce* you to do it, and nothing *ever will*. Then *I* must stay behind—that is all!'

'Perhaps this lady may not object to the dog,' suggested the guard, eager to end the matter, and seeing the gentleman had not a word to say; 'of course if she does not, it can be done.'

'Is it possible, ma'am,' said the lady, addressing herself with an air of stately remonstrance to Lady Adelaide, 'that there can be the slightest objection to my dear little invalid boy having his attached favourite with him in the carriage for a short time?'

Lady Adelaide, roused from her reverie by this appeal, civilly assured her there was none whatever; upon which, to the immense relief of all parties, the great lady condescended to get in, and the train went off.

It took a little while to settle themselves, and arrange all their several rights to back seat, front seat, middle seat, and window: during which revolutionary period, the gentle father of the family was shifted, uncomplaining, into all the seats in succession; but at last order was in some degree established; the boy and the dog being opposite Lady Adelaide. Then Mrs. P. having planted her battery, opened fire, and a serious cannonade it was, raking the whole group—for never, by *any* chance, being ready for *anything*, and thus causing her the very annoyance they knew she disliked

most—that of being exposed to travel with strangers. She did wish, she owned, that railroads had never been invented, and then people who had their own private carriages, could post in comfort wherever they pleased, without being intruded upon; and on this theme she discoursed at considerable length—not always audibly, but quite sufficiently so to make her meek husband blush several times, and feel, at last, absolutely compelled to offer some slight civility, by way of atonement, to the innocent offender in the corner. At the next stoppage he turned to her with some hesitation. ‘I hope that little boy is not troublesome to you, ma’am?’

Considering that neither boy nor dog had been still or peaceable, for one instant, ever since they first took that position, such a hope might have been looked upon as wild, to say the least of it; however, the question was received and responded to with quiet grace, and for the first time Mr. P. had a full view of his fellow-passenger’s countenance. He knew a little more of the world than did his imperious spouse; and felt there could be no mistake about the gentility, decayed or not decayed, of that face and manner.

‘You are fond of children, perhaps, ma’am?’

She bowed silently.

‘We have so often been anxious about that young gentleman, that I am afraid he has been rather too much spoilt to remember always how to behave,’ he continued, in a deprecatory tone, which seemed to cause considerable astonishment and displeasure among the rest of the party; the young ladies touched each other, and tittered audibly; their mamma broke in with an emphatic eulogium on darling Hugh’s invariable good-

ness and docility—which was, in turn, cut short by that young gentleman himself, declaring he must have something to eat—where were his cakes?

Ah! where, indeed? Echo might answer, if she happened to be within hearing, as long as she pleased; nobody had time to appreciate the attention; the matter on hand was too serious.

‘The basket of cakes and things for dear Hugh, Mr. P. You have it, of course? Well, I do think you might have had *some* thought for this poor darling, if for nobody else; you know he didn’t taste a morsel of breakfast, and will be quite ill. If you could not remember such a trifle (of course it is a trifle to *you*, we are quite aware of that), you might at least have told us; and I am sure either of his sisters would have taken care the poor boy had a biscuit, at least, just to keep him from turning faint. How are you, my sweetest boy?’

‘Very hungry, and so is Floss. I *must* have some cake,’ protested Hugh, ‘and I will. I’ll call the guard—he’ll get me some.’

And half out of the window he would have gone next minute, if Lady Adelaide had not arrested him midway, and with an authoritative gesture, that took him too much by surprise for resistance, sent him back into his seat, just as the train moved on. Upon this, there was nothing left for him to do but to kick her for her pains, and then begin deliberately to roar—deaf to all arguments about refreshment stations that must be reached before long; and the commotion in the family—with an accompaniment obligato performed by Floss, in the shrillest of barks—became positively alarming. At the height of the crisis, Lady Adelaide, pity-

ing the thin, white face of the poor spoilt child, happily remembered the stores with which Lucy had provided her, and begged to offer him what she had. Hugh did not wait for parental leave or apologies; his hands were on the spoil in a minute, and he was soon regaling himself and Floss 'on sandwiches and biscuits with considerable relish, and in the most charming humour imaginable. His mamma had therefore no choice, but to make a very gracious bend to the accommodating stranger, and say she was very much obliged to her, she was sure.

'A very civil, thoughtful person, really,' she observed aside to her eldest daughter; 'I am quite sorry to take her things—I dare say she will have no other dinner to-day; a governess, or something of that sort, evidently. I will take an opportunity of saying something kind to her before we get out, poor thing.'

The gentleman did not wait so long; he was liberal in his thanks and regrets; adding, with a significant smile, 'I can see, madam, by your indulgence, you are used to these matters; I am sure you have a little boy of your own?'

He was very sorry he asked this question, for her look was answer enough; and after she had shrunk back into her corner, and turned her head to the window, he made no more attempts at conversation.

How slowly the train seemed to move—how endless appeared the stoppages—how difficult it was, sometimes, not to be patient, but to keep up at all—who could attempt to describe? She leaned her aching head back, and closed her eyes, and tried to forget; repeated mentally first some of the Psalms, then a hymn of Keble's, then the last chapter of the Revelations, then the fourteenth of

John ; and by their help kept down the gnawing irritability of brain and body, which was threatening to destroy her self-control. Happily for her and everybody else, Hugh, satisfied for the present, had gone to sleep with Floss in his arms ; and all sat still and silent till the refreshment station was reached.

It was now twelve o'clock, and the sun was struggling to break out, giving cheering hopes of a fine afternoon. At the desire of Mrs. P., the whole party alighted, except Hugh, who would not stir. His mamma turned to Lady Adelaide as she passed, and in her most affable manner hoped, as they robbed her of her luncheon, she would allow them to offer her something ? She declined civilly, though with rather more distance than Mrs. P. thought at all appropriate in 'a person of that sort ;' however, it prevented the offer from being renewed, and she and Hugh were left together. He was refreshed by his nap, and disposed to be communicative ; told her he was to be a very rich man some day, for his papa had lately made a great deal of money, and they had all become grand people, and had just got a carriage and horses of their own ; and they were going to London ; and there had been such a packing of boxes, and fuss about the girls' things, and the parties they were to give, and the people they were to try and get introduced to, that papa had several times said he wished he had not had the money at all. In the midst of these domestic revelations, Lady Adelaide was unpleasantly startled by the appearance of a head at her open window, and an unshaven face lighted up with malicious exultation.

'So *there* you are, after all, my lady ! Well, if I didn't peep into all the carriages, one after another, in

hopes of finding you, and having the honour to escort you to town ; however, better late than never. I'll e'en secure one of these places at once.'

'They are all taken, sir,' said Lady Adelaide.

'What a nuisance ! However, somebody will get out soon, and I'll make the guard let me know. So you thought to slip away without my knowing, did you, my lady ? Not a bad idea that, but it won't quite do. I had such a race after you ; tore on my clothes, got into my gig, pelted to Shareham half drowned, knocked the folks up at the George, and got a chaise and four, and promised the boys double money if they were in time. They drove like the wind. I am afraid *yours* were rather troublesome, were they not ?'

She deigned no answer. Hugh watched them both with eager eyes.

'Sorry to find you are sent for express ; but it will be all right by the time you arrive, I dare say ; and if it brings 'em round you know—there, I don't mean anything—you needn't colour up like that, my lady. I am sure I only want to be civil, and mean to be. I shall make a point of calling as soon as possible, and paying my respects. Your cousin, Miss Conway, is a charming lady ; not a bit of nonsensical pride about *her*.' He rubbed his hands as he spoke, took his hat off, and smoothed it with his sleeve ; replaced it with a jerk, and leaned his elbows on the door, that he might peer in more at his ease. She sat without looking at him, mechanically unclasping her leather bag, and examining Miss Lyndon's much-prized fittings and conveniences.

'It is very courageous of you to travel in this way by yourself, Lady Adelaide, really. Are you not afraid ?'

'Of what, sir ?' she asked, calmly raising her eyes.

‘Why, of all sorts of things—accidents, and all kinds of annoyances.’

‘I am used to annoyances, sir; and whatever I may be exposed to on my journey, I know I shall be safe from at the end of it, so they are of very little consequence.’

‘Indeed?’ said he, biting his lip; ‘you know it, do you? You have not forgotten what was agreed last night?’

She was silent. Her hand was now on something at the bottom of her bag, and her fingers clenched it tightly.

‘Have you prepared an answer yet?’

She could resist the impulse no longer.

‘Not quite—perhaps *this* may do in the meanwhile.’ And she handed him Mr. Ousel’s letter.

Probably, had it been in her power, she would have recalled the action the next moment; it was contrary to all her fixed resolutions—but it was now too late. He tore open the blank envelope, and found two or three folded papers, endorsed, ‘Copies. The originals forthcoming when required.’ One glance told him what they were, and then it turned to meet hers, in a mixture of terror and rage that made his face quite livid. Before he had time to ask a question, Floss, privately goaded by her young master, made a sudden dash at the window, snapping at him so viciously, that he involuntarily started back, dropping his papers on the platform—and in the scramble to recover them, dropping his hat. Hugh laughed aloud, not very politely, and leaned out to watch him. ‘Oh, how cross he looks! there is his hat rolling off the platform! What fun! Now he has got it—he is shaking his fist at me. I don’t care. I am very glad he is gone, aint you?’

She was too harassed and heart-sick to be glad, even of a release ; but she could not say she was sorry, or think it necessary to comment on this somewhat questionable behaviour. Very thankful was she when Mrs. P. sent her son out a tumbler of water, which Hugh, of his own accord, offered to her first—even before Floss ; and which the three shared amicably among them. Mr. P. soon came back, and one by one, the rest followed ; the lady last of all, and in great danger of being left behind ; so that she had to be hurried in, and the door locked upon her, in rather an ignominious manner. The consequence was that she took the seat next to Hugh, opposite her gentle partner ; and some argument, begun in the station, about the annoyances of this particular train—which it had appeared she had insisted upon choosing in defiance of advice, and which she declared was entirely to satisfy others, as she never cared what became of herself—was resumed with remarkable pungency and spirit ; the only improvement, indeed, that could have been suggested, would have been that it should be deferred to another time.

The scene that had just passed, and the hasty step she had taken, had grievously added to the depression of Lady Adelaide's spirits. She was shocked to find how intense her hatred and disgust of her tormentor had become, and how much anger and scorn had ruffled her hardly-won resignation ; making it very difficult to compose and raise her thoughts, though she felt more worn and unhappy than ever. And now all this jangling, though she could hardly hear what was said, seemed just too much to bear. Would anything stop it ?

She happened to look up, and caught a momentary glimpse of persons running along the embankment,

waving their caps, and making frantic signs. An instinctive prescience of danger made her dart upon little Hugh, seize and throw him on the floor of the carriage. In the very act came a shock, a crash, a blow, a tumult of shrieks—and for a brief interval she knew nothing more.

Consciousness quickly returned, with a sense of pain and oppression. She had been thrown partly on her side, with her arm bent under her, and had been struck on the back of the head by a box of Mrs. P.'s, that had filled up half her husband's allotted place. How much everybody was injured could only be surmised by their incessant screams, which rang, more or less, from one end of the train to the other, but in this carriage more vehemently than any. Her first thought was of the child, and she found strength to ask if he was hurt. A half-stifled voice under the seat relieved her; he was only astonished and upside down, but nothing worse. She made an attempt to rise, but found it impossible in her constrained position, with half the recumbent weight of Mrs. P.'s person weighing her down—whom no persuasion could induce to make the slightest effort, beyond piercing screams for the help nobody could give. After one or two ineffectual struggles, Adelaide was just sinking from faintness and exhaustion, when the door was opened, and a well-known voice rang above all the confusion of sounds—calling her by name, and entreating to know if she were safe.

She looked up, and tried to answer; the next instant dexterous and tender arms were round her—and how, she never knew, she was extricated from her painful position, and carried into the air by Maurice Randolph.

There was no shelter to which he could take her, and no seat but the wet ground ; but she half stood, half leaned, supported on his arm and shoulder, trembling and overcome, yet feeling she had a friend and protector, and in that feeling drawing comfort, before she was capable of doing more.

‘Thank God you are safe!’ murmured Randolph, to whom the whole scene of terror and confusion was lost in that pale face and drooping form he had pined so often to see.

‘Thank God!’ she repeated faintly, ‘for this—for all mercies; for your being here, which is one of them.’

‘To me it is, indeed,’ returned he, in a low, fervent tone, for this was happiness he had hardly dared to hope for; ‘will you, can you trust yourself to me to take care of you—as an old servant of your house?’

‘Oh,’ she said, ‘I owe you so much, I have blessed your name so often, why should I not trust you? I do—as a brother—the brother you would have died with, and lived to save. But do not stay with me; I am not hurt, and many others are.’

He would not leave her, however, till he had contrived her a seat, and wrapped her in his railway rug, which fortunately he had carried out with him, from force of habit—and which at least protected her from the damp. She could not help noticing, as he moved away, that he was rather lame, and a good deal reduced by his illness; but the gladness of his heart seemed to give him new life, and in the work of humanity that called forth his services, he was soon displaying all his wonted energy, if not all his former strength.

The whole scene was by this time one of the wildest confusion, past all power of describing; raging men,

shrieking or fainting women, and crying children ; some shouting for help, some storming against the carelessness of the engine-driver, the neglect of the company, and every other real or imaginary cause of the accident ; some scrambling after their private chattels, others extricating the inmates of the injured carriages, two of which had been flung down the bank, but happily without loss of life. Time alone would show how serious the injuries would prove to be ; there were many of all kinds, but nothing that appeared hopeless or alarming. The accident had been caused by one of those pieces of carelessness which nobody can account for ; they had run into an empty luggage train, which certainly had no business there ; but there it was, and it was no comfort to know it ought to have been anywhere else. Randolph and such gentlemen as preserved their presence of mind, made strenuous exertions to relieve and calm their terrified fellow-passengers ; and the sun breaking at last through the clouds, cheered them all by his warmth and brightness. Assistance came after a time ; some of the worst cases were conveyed to neighbouring farm-houses, and intelligence reaching the nearest station, an engine was despatched to the spot to bring back the others. Of course, the wounded and most helpless, or most frightened, were attended to first ; and Maurice presently perceived that Lady Adelaide, instead of resting quietly as he had begged her to do, was as busy as himself. He tried to remonstrate, but her piteous look silenced him. She felt she must do something, or her endurance would give way. She was thankful for her escape, thankful she had been able to save that child, thankful to know Randolph was near ; but for all this, selfish as it seemed

when so many were in trouble and pain around her, her soul was sick with impatient longing to go on, even if on foot: and active usefulness was her only remedy against murmurs that would approach rebellion.

It was past two o'clock when she found herself back again at the refreshment station they had reached at noon. Twelve hours she had been already in this agony of laborious suspense; how long could she bear it? How *should* she bear it if—no, that would not do to think about. She *would* not give way. When would the line be clear again, and another train ready? They could not say; it must be some hours. She wrung her hands as she turned away; and found Randolph coming in search of her.

'You will be knocked up, Lady Adelaide; do let me get you some refreshment, and try and rest.'

'Oh no, I cannot rest, I only want to go on. Oh, Mr. Randolph,' she said suddenly, with a gesture almost of supplication, 'if you ever did a kindness—you who have offered me so many, and been so ill repaid—have pity on me now, and help me to go on, or I may be too late. You love my boy and he loves you; for his sake, bear with my impatient selfishness, and help me, for I do not know what to do!'

'Come this way,' said he, gently, and drawing her arm in his, led her through the crowd that filled the station, to the outer yard. A chaise was being put to as fast as hands could buckle harness, and her port-manteau and shawl were waiting to be put in, as well as his own travelling gear.

'I secured this just in time,' he said. 'It had brought a party from a distance, and was waiting for a return fare. There were a dozen applicants for it within five

minutes. It had occurred to me you would be glad to go on, so I thought I might take the liberty. Who is this coming limping after us, looking such an object? I declare it is Spindler !'

And Mr. Spindler it was, very lame, his face tied up with his handkerchief, and his hat crushed out of all shape—not to say respectability.

'Lady Adelaide! Lady Adelaide! I must speak to you—only one minute!' And as he sank down on her portmanteau, overcome with pain and exhaustion, she could not, in ordinary humanity, refuse to wait. Was he hurt? Could they be of any service? Hurt? yes, he should think so, and so the insurance would find; luckily he *was* insured, and he would have it out of them, they might be sure of that. He had lost two teeth, and his head was cut, and his ankle was twisted, and he ached in every bone—it would be the death of him, he knew. But he must say something to her, if he died for it, and he clutched her dress so tightly, she could not have escaped if she would. Her compassion made her forget herself; she looked at Randolph, and he understood the look, and without asking leave, forthwith carried Mr. Spindler into the station, procured water and linen with some difficulty, and then supported him, while Lady Adelaide, with the practised hand she had perforce acquired in her Indian campaign, bathed and bound up his wound. He groaned bitterly several times when she was so employed, but muttered directly afterwards, 'Never mind; I'm insured,' as a species of consolation that made up for everything. When all was done that humanity could suggest, and he seemed a little refreshed, she quietly bade him good-bye, and was following Randolph, who had

hastened to see after the carriage, but he started up wildly.

‘I must speak to you—one word! That— that packet—those letters—not a line is true, not a syllable—but it may do me a deal of mischief if it gets about. I’ll tell you all about it—but you *must* silence *him*. What will content you? Anything in reason!’

She shook her head, and moved to go, but he clung to her skirts.

‘You don’t understand—ladies never do—and you fancy all sorts of things; I tell you it was nothing in itself, but it could be made a handle of to annoy me. He must have got hold of it in his grandfather’s papers, I suppose. I *must* be sure of your silence and his, one way or another. He’ll do whatever you bid him, and if you promise, I can trust to your word. Look here—will *this* be enough to make us friends?’

He held out a document she knew too well; it was her bond. She blushed deeply as she looked at it, and involuntarily glanced at the doorway where Randolph was waiting.

‘You offer so high a price for my secrecy, Mr. Spindler, it is difficult to believe the affair can be as unimportant as you say; but you should ascertain first whether that secrecy be worth your buying. I gave you the letter under a momentary impulse of irritation, but I am perfectly ignorant of the contents, and have no wish to know them.’

He stared at her in blank astonishment. She quietly drew her dress from his relaxing hold, wished him a speedy recovery, and left him. Another interruption awaited her, however; for, in making her way to the

chaise, she suddenly found herself detained by her late fellow-traveller, Mr. P. in such a state of breathless excitement, that his words came out in short, broken gasps.

‘Oh, ma’am!—oh, your ladyship!—we have been looking for you everywhere!—My wife and daughters hope they may be allowed—indeed, I do not know how to express—our thankfulness to you no tongue can—such presence of mind, such kind consideration!—If I only had breath to say what I ought—’

She civilly assured him he had very little to thank her for; she was only glad she had been able, in any way, to prevent his little boy from being hurt; and with that, would have moved on; but he held her fast, looking anxiously about among the crowd for the rest of his party.

‘My wife, ma’am, I know, wants to make you her apologies; if she had only known to whom she had had the honour of speaking—dear, dear, I can’t express myself at all as she would—where *can* she be? She was sadly knocked about, and frightened, and so were the girls, but they were here just now; and yet, I can’t see them anywhere, for the crowd. They will never give me a moment’s peace, if—Oh, ma’am, could you not wait a minute, to see the dear boy you saved?’

‘Impossible, sir!’ she said, breaking from him; but stopping the next moment, to add in a tone of gentle apology, ‘pray excuse this haste; when I tell you I am going to my own little boy’s sick bed, you will not wish to hinder me any more, I am sure.’

The appeal was, indeed, irresistible; he could only stammer some very sincere, though scarcely audible expressions of regret and sympathy, as she hurried

past to the chaise. Randolph handed her in, and took his seat by her side. It was some little time before he ventured to look round—for he knew she was weeping.

Those tears, though she checked them as soon as she could, probably saved her from worse suffering; they were the first she had shed since the news had come, and were a great relief. But as they proceeded on their way, her exhaustion began to alarm her companion. She could not deny that her head ached severely, and that she had a pain in her side; but if he mentioned stopping to rest, her gesture of entreaty was so piteous, he could do nothing but promise liberal gratuities to the drivers to redouble their speed. Some slight refreshment that she accepted when they reached the town where they were again to join the railway, revived her a little; and they were compelled to rest, whether they liked it or not, for the train was much later than they had been led to expect. Very little was said by either during any part of the journey; her suffering was too sacred for Randolph to intrude on; all he could attempt was to serve her respectfully and tenderly, without letting her see it more than he could help; forestalling her wishes, relieving her from every exertion or difficulty—and only watching her when he could do it unobserved. He even refrained from commenting on her increased pallor and fatigue; and in outward appearance remained calm and cheerful, while his whole soul was racked with anxious sympathy.

He had only reached England the day before, and had hurried on to Lilford without stopping, intending to proceed by the Shareham coach in the morning—

when the sight of her in the coffee-room changed all his plans, and he had just time to redeem her watch, and secure his own ticket by the same train ; in order, as he pleaded with himself, that she might at least have some one within reach if wanted—but in reality, because he could do no otherwise than follow, let her go where she might. Through the long weary hours of confinement and recovery, the yearning after her had been the severest trial of all ; and now, as he witnessed her patient anguish, and his own impotence to give her relief, it seemed as if all he had ever felt before had been an illusion ; as if he had never really loved her till that moment, when he loved too unselfishly to think of himself or of what she thought of him—only how he could lighten her burden, and give her worn spirit rest.

They reached the terminus at last, and looked eagerly round for some friend or servant who might be waiting to convey Lady Adelaide, and bring her the latest news. No one was there. Randolph understood her mute sign, hailed the first cab, followed her into it, and told the driver to go as hard as he could to — Street. Not a word was said ; she sat with her head bowed down, her hands tightly locked on her knee ; and, as Maurice's own stout heart grew sick with foreboding, he durst not imagine what was going on in hers.

The streets were full, the bright sunshine had sent out everybody who had been so long shut up by rain ; the parks were thronging with carriages and riders ; and the glittering London world, in which she had once played so graceful a part, shot its gleams once more on Adelaide Lyndon, but unheeded as if they had fallen on her tomb. In one long, silent, motionless agony of

prayer, she passed that last, most trying interval ; and saw nothing, heard nothing, but her hope and her dread, as they strove together within her. It was between six and seven when they entered — Street, and drove up to the once familiar door. Both gave one glance at the windows, and then at each other—a glance that neither ever forgot.

The house was shut up.

CHAPTER XV.

Beatrice. O, schönes Engelsantlitz meiner Mutter!

So bin ich wieder in dem Schoss der Meinen?

Isabella. Und nichts soll uns mehr scheiden, als der Tod.

SCHILLER.

NEVER, in all Maurice Randolph's chequered life, had he experienced such a moment as that. The courage that had carried him so gallantly through fire and flood, was so completely crushed by this stroke, that he staggered as he stepped upon the pavement; and when he mechanically assisted his unhappy companion to alight, could not see a feature in her face. But the porter did, who opened the door; and at the sight of its ghastly, pallid agony, the official speech of subdued explanation died on his lips. She asked no question—put him by with a wave of her hand, and passed swiftly on through the darkened hall—which she had last crossed in the early morning, in misgiving, and fear, and trembling hope, on her ill-fated wedding-day, ten years ago. There was a murmur of voices round her, though whence they came she stayed not to see; a question, 'When did it happen?' and an answer, 'At half-past one this afternoon,' and then a cry burst from her that rang through the hushed house—and blindly, but by instinct, she rushed up the staircase, too fast for

any one to stay her, never pausing to breathe till she was on the bedroom flight, at her mother's door. At the moment she reached it, that door was opened by Lady Delaunay herself, who, like every one else, had been startled by that unearthly shriek. She gave an involuntary start at the sight of the deathlike face, then sprang forwards with a guarded but fervent ejaculation of tenderness, and clasped her in her arms.

'My child, my daughter, my Adelaide!—I feared this—but it is not what you think; mercy—mercy has been shown to you and me, and our boy is better—he has been for some hours; there is no longer any cause for alarm whatever. Yes, you shall see him this instant; come this way. You will be cautious—you will command yourself for his sake, I know.'

And judging rightly that it was the most merciful thing to do, she led her at once through the dressing-room and bedroom Adelaide knew so well, to one she had once known better still; for it had been her own in early childhood, and for that reason had been allotted to her boy. She heard, as through a mist, her mother's voice saying softly, 'Your nurse has come at last, Walter, but very tired; so we must not let her do too much;' and by feeling, more than by sight, she found she had reached a bedside, and was within the curtain, and was kneeling with her face in the pillow, and two hot shaking hands were drawing her neck nearer and nearer, with a low, husky whisper, 'You dear, darling mamma, I am so glad—now we shall be all right!' What happened next she knew not, nor how long she there remained; she felt as if she could not rise, she could not even utter a thanksgiving; the mercy was as overwhelming as the judgment, and nature was too

worn out to do more. There came an interval of dim confusion, in which she was just aware of a sensation like sinking through the floor, and then she found herself on a sofa in the dressing-room, her head resting on her mother's bosom, and her brother chafing her hands. She heard tender, pitying words as she opened her eyes ; and then came soft kisses, like a gentle rain on a parched and thirsty land. She feared to move—to break the charm ; it was what she had dreamed so often, and dreaded to awaken from again ; but she raised her eyes to her mother's face bent over her in anxious solicitude, and then looked down on the eager countenance of her brother kneeling by her side, and tried to speak—and the instant she did so, the emotion suppressed by intensity of suffering through the day, broke down every barrier of self-control, while the more she tried to hide or stop the tears that gushed through her fingers, the faster they poured forth. But this time there were others to mingle with them ; Lady Delaunay folded her yet closer to her heart, and her own voice was broken with weeping, as she pressed her lips on the dark hair and slender hands that hid Adelaide's face.

‘ Look up, look up ! ’ she said earnestly, ‘ my own daughter, mine once more for ever ! It is all forgiven—all forgotten : nothing remains of the sorrowful past but the fruits of adversity, and the lessons God teaches us by our own errors and wrong. I have tried you sorely—I fear, cruelly—and you have borne it all with patience : but you do not know, you cannot, how I longed when we last parted, to do as I do now—take you to my arms and my heart, and tell you we will part no more. I was hard in my manner, but I yearned over you, Adelaide, as I have done many a time through all

these years of estrangement, which are ended at last,—God be thanked—for ever ! Death may divide us in the body, but never again in heart !’

Adelaide twined her arms round her, and buried her face, still bathed in tears, in her bosom.

‘ Let me hear you bless me,’ she murmured, ‘ and I shall believe this is real.’

She felt her mother’s hands laid on her head, and heard the solemn words of benediction she had thought never to hear again, and knew she was forgiven indeed. Further exertion was impossible ; her brother sat by her side, whispering kind words and remorseful regrets for past negligence, which she had no voice to answer ; but she rested against his shoulder, as in the days of their childish play, and passively surrendered herself to the tender cares which her mother was lavishing upon her, as if jealous of her newly found treasure. Tea was brought in, and Lady Delaunay’s own hands served her, silencing her faint remonstrance with the playfully imperative reminder, that now she was come home, she must be a good child and do as she was bid. Every word, every look, everything that was done or implied, confirmed the glad conviction of her being really at home, not only welcomed, but beloved : and notwithstanding bodily pain, weariness, and indisposition, a deep sense of happiness, the deeper for her recent agony, gradually sank into her heart, and diffused itself over her face, veiling with a beauty of its own the pallor of exhaustion and the furrows of tears.

It was not, however, till her mother had gone back to her invalid to take him some tea, and re-assure him on the subject of his mamma, that she gathered

strength to express what she felt. 'Oh Bertram, Bertram!' she said, 'how I have prayed for this moment, and despaired of it again and again! Is it possible, that loving me still as you do, you have never till now believed in my love for *you*, nor how I pined to see you once more?'

'Hush, hush!' he said hastily, 'if you do not want to cut me to the heart, do not say such things: they make me detest myself. I do not know how it was—I always wished to see you back here, and to know it was all made up; but whenever I wanted to do anything for you, Charlotte persuaded me I should only make matters worse. It was her belief, I know, that my mother would be more ready to forgive if left to take her own time: and so it went on—I see I was wrong—I ought to have taken it up, and insisted on something being done; and from my soul, Adelaide, I ask you to forgive *me*. I thought of it, I can tell you, when I believed my last hour was come, and it was too late to make amends; and afterwards when I was confined to my bed, I determined to come and see you the first thing; but then I found my mother and you had met, and she had taken it all into her own hands, so I had better not interfere. I am afraid, though, if the truth must be told, I have been the cause of your patience being longer tried than it might otherwise have been, by keeping her as I did; you will forgive me for that when you have time to appreciate the cause. I know you will love Frances Cameron, and what is more, her father knows more of you than you are perhaps aware. He has told us things that we never dreamed of, and I can tell *you*, I have been made proud of my poor neglected sister—and I am much

deceived if my mother is not prouder still. You should have seen your Walter's face when Sir Duncan was praising your heroism. Poor little man! I am afraid you must have had a terrible shock when you arrived. You had not heard of our being summoned, I suppose—so it would not have occurred to you that poor Mrs. Marsden was gone.'

She had forgotten the darkened house, and was shocked at her own indifference.

'Is she, indeed? I loved her dearly once, but like others, she became so totally estranged, that death can hardly divide us more. And yet it seems ungrateful and selfish only to remember it was *not* the *one* I thought.'

'Very natural that you should. We had no idea she was so ill, till Mr. Powys wrote that he thought her state very serious, and that she had owned it would be a great comfort to see us again, though she did not like to send for us. Of course, this was enough to make us start immediately, and we found her sinking fast when we came; conscious just at intervals, and speaking a sentence or two at a time, when she recognised a face—but nothing more. Walter, I am afraid, took cold on the journey; it was very wet weather, and it brought on a swelled throat. My mother did not get alarmed about it till yesterday, when he could hardly breathe, and she thought at times he really would be suffocated, for nothing seemed to relieve the swelling. If it had not been for the poor old lady's state, I should have come off to fetch you at once; but she was not easy, I found, except when one of us was by, and as my mother could not leave Walter, I was obliged to be constantly at hand. She often tried to tell me something, but I could make out very little, except

that it was about 'poor Ada.' She may have felt, as I had done myself, that she had not been as kind to you as she ought, and it was now too late. At any rate, you were evidently in her thoughts, for the last time she saw my mother, an hour before her death, she contrived to say something distinctly about forgiving you.'

'What time did she die?' asked Adelaide, much moved by this unexpected trait.

'At half-past one this afternoon. By that time Walter had been easier some hours, so that my mother could venture to leave him. He was so bad in the night that she decided it would be necessary to telegraph to you, so that you might secure the earliest train. I shall not easily forget her look when she told me, she should never forgive herself, if—but there, it was ordered otherwise. Our own medical man was in the house all night, and between two and three his remedies proved more successful; the boy was relieved, and has been going on well ever since. All he will want now will be careful nursing; perhaps sea-bathing by-and-by. We will all go on down together somewhere, as soon as the hot weather comes, and recruit you both. For I can tell you plainly, Adelaide, you do not leave us again. My mother and I settled that as soon as we had time to settle anything. It was our only comfort this trying day, when we did not know what could have happened to delay your arrival. I went twice to the station myself, and again this last time, when I was just too late—as I was at Southampton, when you came from India. Did you never hear that I went to meet you, and found you had gone on to Cannymoor?'

‘Never. Oh, Bertram! if you had only been in time, how much sorrow it would have prevented!’

‘Yes, it will not do to think of now, I am afraid. I know Charlotte thought at the time, it would not have done either of us much good, as she said you considered yourself too unjustly treated to be willing to make the necessary submission; which, I must own, I never so completely believed as when that unlucky message of mine received no answer. Henry Lyndon explained to me how it was; and my first object after making friends with Mr. Randolph when I see him again, will be to quarrel with him for his carelessness. My dear girl, what is the matter?’

‘How could I be so ungrateful as to forget him all this time? Is he still here?’

‘Who? Mr. Randolph? No; he was just gone when I came; his card was on the table. Did you meet him?’

‘Yes, at Lilford, and I do not know what I should have done without his kindness and consideration. What will he think of my want of gratitude?’ And hurriedly, but earnestly, she described her journey, and all Randolph had done, reproaching herself for having allowed him to depart without a word of acknowledgment. The Earl, however, satisfied her, at last, by promising to find him next day.

‘We have a pretty long score to clear off among us,’ he said, with a smile, ‘and what is more,’ he added, with a shake of the head, ‘we have some misrepresentations to trace out and atone for. However, it will go hard with us if we do not find some way of making our peace, let him be as sensitive as he may. Now I will just have one peep at my nephew, and

then leave you to rest, before I am summarily turned out.'

They went into Walter's room together, and found Lady Delaunay sitting by his side. His eyes brightened as they approached, and turned from one face to another with an eager but unspoken question, which his uncle took upon himself to answer, as he bent over his pillow. 'One home belongs to us all from this time, Walter. Ask grandmamma, and she will tell you the same.'

But there was no need to ask; his mother's face was quite enough; for though he had never seen her look so tired, he could never remember seeing her smile like that.

It was hardly to be expected that such a journey, with its combined drawbacks of mental suffering, unfavourable weather, and accident, would not tell on the strength of Lady Adelaide; its effects indeed, were making themselves felt already. It was easy to own she was weary—to accept gladly the proposal of sharing her mother's room, so as to be near Walter in the night—to lie down, attended by her care and blessing as if she were a child once more;—but it was not so easy to sleep, with a throbbing head, and aching limbs, and a brain, through which every sound of the last four-and-twenty hours' turmoil was ringing without cessation. If she closed her eyes for a moment in forgetfulness, she heard the wind, and the rain, and the plunging of the horses through the mire; and woke panting with the exertion of struggling to go on, up endless hills, and through countless obstacles; or the screams of the people in the train, and the whizz of engine after engine coming to crush them as they lay,

made her start up—once so wildly, that it roused Lady Delaunay, who, after sitting up half the night with Walter, had just fallen asleep. The nervous suffering so unconsciously revealed, went to her very heart; but her tender words and caresses by degrees took effect, and Adelaide at last slept quietly, with her mother's hand locked in hers. Still, morning found her so unwell, a decree was passed, consigning her to medical and nursing treatment, and confinement for the present to those three rooms; all cares and agitation prohibited, and nothing allowed her to do but to rest, and amuse Walter.

How gladly she submitted to her sentence—feeling just ill enough to be fit for no exertion, and yet not so ill as to be indifferent to the luxury of rest—her heart tranquillized, her spirits cheered by the sight of loved faces, and the restoration to her home—may be imagined without description. It was a Paradise of repose after all she had gone through, to watch her boy's daily amendment, and take a part in it by the pleasure her presence gave him; to recline in her arm-chair by his side while he slept, with her Bible before her, thinking over all her deliverances, and refreshing her soul with quiet prayer; and to have her mother's fostering presence ever felt, even when unseen, through countless instances of considerate affection; proving how constantly she was in her thoughts, and yet how careful she was not to wound her feelings. With a grateful humility, that touched Lady Delaunay more than the most eloquent words, she accepted every fresh kindness as it was offered; as if all were so undeserved, she had no right to select, or to remonstrate against any. She seemed, indeed, as she had once said, to have resigned

herself into her mother's hands, to do with her what she would ; and her quiet trust in her protection and tenderness, calmed every doubt, and removed every fear.

Care had, however, been too long her companion to be shaken off in a moment ; one burden, forgotten at first, resumed its pressure with the first bulletin she despatched to Cannymoor, and could not again be laid aside. There seemed a fatality about her letters, for the one she had written to her mother, and which she remembered seeing Penelope put into her bag, she could not find anywhere ; and was forced to conclude it had been lost in the confusion of the railway accident. To write it over again was a task beyond her powers, and for an opportunity of bringing the subject forward, she waited in vain. Her mother was either too busy, or too tired, for her to venture on adding to her cares ; especially as she owed to being oppressed with business just now, and looked at times nearly worn out. Once, indeed, she made a desperate effort, and was beginning to enter on the subject of her difficulties ; but Lady Delaunay kindly, but decidedly, stopped her short.

'I fully appreciate your frank confidence,' she said, 'and you shall see I know how to return it. Trust begets trust, as I told you before ; but spare me and yourself any discussions just now ; you are not fit for the exertion yet, and I have not time to attend to you properly. We shall have more leisure next week ; and meanwhile, all you have to do is to keep your mind tranquil, and rely on me.'

After this, what could she do but wait patiently, and hope that the delay would be of no consequence ; though

every hour so deepened the repugnance she felt, in naming the subject at all, that she sometimes doubted her courage holding out. This doubt was in no way diminished by a private and confidential missive she received from Miss Conway.

It had been rather a relief to Lady Adelaide to hear that her cousin was too much overcome by her loss, and the fatigue of nursing, to be equal to paying her a visit before the funeral. She felt so strongly the impossibility of their intimacy being ever renewed, that she shrank from their first meeting with a nervous emotion, which she believed Charlotte must in some degree share. This mysterious communication was therefore as unwelcome as unexpected, and the contents more than confirmed her misgivings.

‘Unequal as I am, dear Adelaide, to much exertion in the heavy depression of my spirits, I must write you a hasty line to put you on your guard. Whatever may have been insinuated by evil-minded persons, I have your interests too much at heart, not to dread anything occurring to mar the happy union with your dearest mother, on which I congratulate you sincerely, and hope to witness in person. It is right you should be aware that *a certain gentleman* called here yesterday, and as he begged for an interview on urgent business, I was obliged to see him for a few minutes. I was much dismayed by what he told me, having no idea how seriously you were involved. He was in a very resentful mood, and I had great difficulty in pacifying him for the present. My dread is, lest it should come to your dear mother’s knowledge, as I know nothing that would pain or shock her more. She has shown such confidence in the disinterestedness of your submission,

and of your assurance that you have no debts whatever— (I did suggest, while she was at Cannymoor, that you might have some little difficulties, hoping she would do something for you on the spot) that I cannot imagine what would be the result of such an unexpected demand on her liberality, just at the moment when she is so worried by other things. In strictest confidence, I am afraid Delaunay has allowed his affairs to fall into such confusion, that before any settlements can be made, your mother will have a great deal of trouble, if not of actual loss. But we can consult what is to be done, when I am with you; and by that time I may be able to help you with something more satisfactory than sympathy or advice. Not that I pretend to advise, for a moment. You are, after all, the best judge. Destroy this as soon as read, and depend as ever, on my sincere affection.'

It was the well-known subtle reasoning that had been so fatally persuasive in her youth. Adelaide destroyed the letter as she was desired, but to forget it was impossible.

Lord Delaunay had seen but little of his sister since that first evening. Besides his own affairs, he had a great deal to attend to in those of his deceased relative; and as it had been her wish to be buried in the family vault, near General Conway, went himself into the country to make the necessary arrangements. On the day of the funeral, Lady Delaunay went to Bryanstone Square to assist her niece, and bring her home. The body had been removed early in the morning, and the Earl was to join them on his return, after the will had been read.

‘If you are equal to it, my dear,’ Lady Delaunay said to her daughter, as she left her, ‘and can come down into the drawing-room against our arrival, I shall be glad to have a little serious conversation with you both; as there are one or two questions I wish to ask you in the presence of each other. If we ever hope to live together in confidence and comfort, we must begin by thoroughly clearing up all misunderstandings. I rely on *your* openness, and should be sorry not to do the same on *hers*, so that where you appear to differ in your statements, it must be owing to something that cannot be too soon explained.’

Mrs. Marsden’s quiet and harmless life had not been so unfruitful as many might have supposed. In her old-fashioned way, she had done much unobtrusive good, and many poor old pensioners required a great deal of consoling for the loss of one, who had never kept her hand shut against trouble that she knew, though she might not have been particularly diligent in seeking it out. Traits of kindness that nobody had suspected, were continually being brought to light; justifying the excessive grief of her old servants, who had done as they pleased so long, it was difficult for them not to feel grievously wronged in the prospect of losing so comfortable a home. Nobody was more ready to sympathize with these, not entirely disinterested mourners, than Miss Conway; her condolence being the more sincere, that she knew better than most, what excellent reason they had for their very worst anticipations.

With a melancholy sigh Lady Delaunay looked round the once familiar room, where the kinswoman she had known so many years had wel-

comed her so often ; at her age, the breaking of a single tie was not a matter to be easily repaired ; and the qualities of her poor old friend, widely as they differed from her own, appearing to her now in their gentlest and most endearing light, she perhaps began to feel, as if in the pride of intellectual superiority, she might have too lightly esteemed her judgment and goodness.

‘Yes,’ she said, half unconsciously, as if following some train of thought, ‘there was more real wisdom in her simplicity than in many a more brilliant understanding. I shall never forget what she said to me that morning of my journey, nor how she said it ; though I little knew at the time, how deep was the truth her words contained.’

Miss Conway, rather embarrassed how to answer, made some suitable observation on Mrs. Marsden’s kindness and justice of heart.

‘You are right, Charlotte ; she possessed both those qualities. Her last words to me were to beg me to pardon Ada ; and that she hoped she had done justice—she had tried to do it. If she failed, it may have been because justice is the most difficult thing that can be given to mortal wisdom to do. Deceived in ourselves as often as in others, who is sufficient for these things ?’

Miss Conway made no reply. A scene which she would fain have forgotten, rose upon her memory while her aunt was speaking ; her old friend gasping for breath, and holding her hand in both hers, while her dim eyes fixed a beseeching gaze on her face, and her trembling lips again and again repeated, ‘I only want to do justice ; tell me if there is anything you will wish

you had told me, before it is too late.' And she had pressed those cold lips with hers, and in the very face of Death had asserted she had nothing to tell. Certainly, the time had not yet come for her to wish she *had* told her that which might have altered her arrangements for the future ; but the words and the look were very trying to recal, and would return, in spite of all her reasonings with her conscience. In silent thoughtfulness as profound as her own, she accompanied her aunt into the carriage, and the drive passed without a word being spoken on either side. As they entered the hall, Anderson, who seemed to have been on the watch, came forward with more eagerness than he usually considered to be compatible with dignity.

'Her ladyship is in the dining-room, my lady.'

'In the dining-room ? Is any one with her ?' asked Lady Delaunay, in some surprise.

'A gentleman called to see her ladyship on business, my lady, and she ordered him to be shown in there.'

'Is it Mr. Henry Lyndon, do you know ?'

'No, my lady—Mr. Spindler.'

The proud blood flushed in Lady Delaunay's face ; she stepped hastily towards the dining-room door. Miss Conway tried to detain her.

'Let me speak to you for a moment, dearest aunt ! let me try and explain. Indeed there are great allowances to be made for her, and if a mistaken delicacy has induced her to keep back the truth——'

'No more, Charlotte—let go my arm. You mean well, but no one shall interfere between me and my daughter again—not even you.'

And as she spoke, she opened the door. Mr. Spindler, whose back was towards it, turned with a start, and a low,

apologetic bow. Lady Adelaide turned too, looked at her mother's face, saw her eye flash at the sight of her visitor, and in the bitterness of the humiliation lost all her courage. Stung to the quick by the insulting threats of her persecutor, who had made one last desperate effort to terrify her into something like submission and acquiescence, she had felt a moment before, that to be released from him she could do anything; but the grave displeasure that she saw veiled in the politeness with which Lady Delaunay returned his greeting, pained her so deeply, she could only stand motionless, longing, yet dreading to hear what she would say first.

The voice, however, in which the Countess spoke, betrayed no resentment; it was calmly courteous, assuring her visitor, who still stood bowing and stammering a sort of apology, that none was required—urgent business precluded the necessity, and she was quite aware nothing less would have induced him to favour them with a visit at such a time.

He cleared his throat, struggling to preserve what he considered his proper position.

'It is urgent business, Lady Delaunay, as you rightly suppose; and when I explain the whole to you, as I propose doing, you will be able to judge whether or not I have been handsomely treated. But may be, my Lady Adelaide prefers explaining it herself, in which case I shall be happy to wait.'

'Mr. Spindler,' interrupted Miss Conway, in a tone of persuasive softness, 'might not these explanations be deferred to another day? My cousin is not well, and I am sure, from the friendly regard you have expressed for her, you would be sorry to cause her unnecessary agitation and inconvenience.'

‘I should, indeed, Miss Conway; you do me but justice, madam; but business is business, and as the liberal terms I offered have been insultingly rejected, I can only say, that if ladies of quality choose to owe money, they must pay like commoners, or take the consequences.’

‘I quite agree with you, sir,’ said Lady Delaunay, drily; ‘and since that is your errand, we will spare you the trouble of explanation. Adelaide, my love——’

The gentle tone gave life to the sinking heart; she met her mother’s eyes, fixed upon her, full of pity, and in that unhopèd-for mercy found courage to move forwards, and voice to speak.

‘As Mr. Spindler has left the explanation to me, my dearest mother, I will do it in very few words, while your goodness gives me strength. He holds my bond for two thousand pounds, the payment of which I guaranteed within a period now expired. How I was led to subscribe such a deed, I cannot explain to you now, or before him. I wrote you the whole particulars the very night you sent for me, and must have lost the letter on the way, for when I was going to put it into your hands, it was gone. Much as I have longed to do so, I have not been equal to writing it again; and you know when I have attempted to speak to you on business, you desired me to wait till you were less engaged. This is the simple truth. I did not anticipate that Mr. Spindler would have selected such a time to treat me as he has done to-day, and therefore was not prepared to hear, that if I crossed your threshold, I should be arrested at the door—unless I stooped to accept conditions more degrading still. In telling you this, I feel most bitterly how much you have

to pardon ; but oh, if you can—you who have pardoned so much already—forgive the affront of which I have been the cause, and save me, defenceless as I am, from the cruelty of a man who, from the moment he discovered where he could wound me most grievously, has never spared me a single blow that he had power to inflict !’

She felt Lady Delaunay tenderly draw her arm in hers, and her head sank on her shoulder. ‘Ah, mother,’ she murmured ; ‘in taking me back you must lay your account with sorrow and trouble—for I bring them with me wherever I go !’

‘Sit down, my love,’ said Lady Delaunay, gently placing her in a chair, and passing her hand caressingly over her hair ; ‘fear nothing, but trust to me. From sorrow I cannot shield you, it is our heritage ; but from outrage and persecution, I can and will. On one subject I can relieve you at once, and only wish I had known your uneasiness before. Your letter was not lost—I have it now.’

Adelaide almost sprang from her seat ; her mother gently kept her down.

‘I found it the night you arrived, and seeing it directed to myself, took it for granted you had placed it there intentionally. You were too unwell for me to enter on the subject afterwards, but I thought you understood by my manner that all was to be as you wished. I was certainly not more prepared than yourself for the severe measures this gentleman seems disposed to employ, but I had already taken steps for his complete satisfaction, and can only regret he should have had so much unnecessary trouble. If I do not mistake, the friend whom I appointed to call about this

very business is just arrived, and it can be wound up immediately.'

She gave a sign to Anderson, who had just opened the door, and he directly after announced Mr. Henry Lyndon. The cordial manner in which the Countess received him, was inexpressibly gratifying to Lady Adelaide, who, on her part, could only press his hand in both hers, without saying a word. His presence was a real support and protection, as welcome in its way as her mother's; and to see him on friendly terms in that house was an implied amnesty for the past, to which, even in that moment, she could not be insensible. A few words passed between him and Lady Delaunay, and then she beckoned to her daughter to come to the writing-table at which she had seated herself.

'From what I told you of my affairs, my dear Adelaide,' she said, gravely, but kindly, 'you can understand that I am not in the habit of keeping any considerable sum at my banker's; and it required a little consideration and arrangement to do what I resolved I would directly I read your letter. I put the matter into the hands of Mr. Henry Lyndon, that we might have the double advantage of friendly goodwill, as well as of practical ability, in dealing with our difficulties. You shall know exactly what has been done—there are no secrets between us henceforth. I had already received an offer for my house at Brighton, which I had not accepted, thinking I might fit it up for the use of my young people at the Home. This offer Mr. Lyndon did not consider its full value, and in short, he has concluded a much better bargain than I could have done; and this has enabled me to transfer to your

account at C—'s bank, the sum of £5000, at your complete disposal. Draw your own cheque for this immediate necessity ; and then employ the residue for Mr. Lyndon's accommodation, in whatever way your cousin recommends, and as your duty and gratitude prompt you.'

She rose as she spoke these last words, and signed to her to take her place. Lady Adelaide's heart was too full for any expression of what she felt, but she clasped her mother's hand tightly, and pressed it to her lips, giving Henry a look, at the same time, that was eloquent in its silence. He, remembering how and where he had last seen them together, returned the look with one that showed he understood its meaning ; and found a moment to whisper his warm satisfaction at the change. She struggled to reply. 'Now you see what *she* is, you see what I have been. How can I ever requite such goodness ?'

'I will show you presently. Let us first finish what we have to do. If you will be good enough to step this way, Mr. Spindler, we will settle all this in a few minutes.'

Mr. Spindler had no excuse for delay, whatever might have been his private inclinations ; and the necessary forms being gone through, the business was speedily arranged. Lady Delaunay then turned to him with the same unruffled politeness she had preserved all along. 'Have you any further claims on Lady Adelaide Lyndon's time, sir ?'

'N—no—I cannot say—I do not think I have, exactly,' said he, smoothing his hat, and enraged with himself for feeling somewhat confounded.

'Then I think, sir, we need no longer trespass upon

yours. Mr. Lyndon, may I trouble you? Thank you.'

'Do you mean to turn me out of your house, madam?' cried he, flushing red, and speaking thick with excessive rage. 'What do you take me for that you treat me like this?'

'*That*, sir, is immaterial. The society in which I first met you, is your claim at present, which I am unwilling to forget; and therefore have the honour to wish you good morning. The door, Anderson.'

'You hear, Mr. Spindler?' said Henry, emphatically, seeing him not disposed to move; and advancing a step with an unmistakeable gesture of menace. His interference seemed the unkindest cut of all, and spite giving him the courage he had been struggling for in vain, he turned and faced Lady Delaunay boldly for the first time.

'I thank you, madam; I never forget an affront, and you shall, sooner or later, remember this. My Lady Adelaide knows me of old, and can tell you the same. I have had many from her, but I can truly say I bear her no malice. Let her do what she will, we are quits, and I am satisfied; for if she lives to be a hundred, she will never quite forget the fright she has had to-day. I leave her the recollection, as a parting token of the profound respect and admiration I feel for her person, her character, and her improved position in society.'

He bowed low, and drew nearer the door; but their silence provoking him beyond bearing, his spleen could not be restrained from another burst.

'If your ladyship means to patch up Mr. Lyndon's affairs, you have undertaken a pleasant task, and clever

as my friend here may be, I advise you to look sharp about it, or you may be too late. I did my best in the proposal I made my Lady Adelaide, which, of course, is considered amazing presumption on my part. But it may be just as well to remind great ladies who think themselves so much better than other people—I *will* speak, Henry Lyndon! Mind your own affairs, sir! This lady *shall* hear plain speaking for once—to remind Lady Delaunay, that at the time I laid a princely fortune at her daughter's feet, for all she is an Earl's daughter, she had not a home of her own to put her head into, and couldn't pay for her charities without selling her wardrobe—while her own mother was rolling in riches, and never cared sixpence whether she had any wardrobe to sell!

'One word more,' said Henry Lyndon, 'and I shall pitch you into the hall. You know how to take a hint as well as most men—take this, and go.'

His menacing air, and indignant eye, the more significant from his habitual coolness, had their effect, for Mr. Spindler retreated hastily, not feeling at all sure that the threat would not be executed. Henry was following him indeed with rather ominous *em-pressement*, when Lady Delaunay's voice arrested his steps. 'Do not touch him—do not answer him, Mr. Lyndon. His rebuke is just. Yes,' she added, as the door closed on the enemy, and she turned to look in her daughter's face, with a gaze dimmed by emotion, 'he spoke more truly than he knew; and mean as is the instrument, I know whence comes the blow. I was too unrelenting with you, Adelaide; I ought to have sought you out, not waited for your seeking me; and the friend we have buried to-day was the first who

had courage to tell me so. Before your cousin, who has so often witnessed my inflexibility—before your friend and relation, who first witnessed our estrangement, I acknowledge what no one ever heard me do before—as I vowed I would do, that terrible night, when I trembled for Walter's life—if you failed in your duty to me, I failed in mine to you still more. Your humility and patience have put me to shame, and the pardon you have found so hard to win, I ask you now to grant to me.'

She held out her hands beseechingly to her daughter, whom this acknowledgment so touched and troubled, that she could make no answer, except by clasping them in her own. But Henry Lyndon spoke, and with the earnest gravity of one who had a right to be heard.

'The friend who showed you that proof of courage, Lady Delaunay, has left, not only an example behind her to be followed, but the means and the obligation of following it. In her name, and in the name of the truth, which your magnanimity has enabled you to see in part, but cannot in the whole—I beg you to allow me a few minutes' private conversation, that I may discharge a duty I promised should be performed to-day.'

His earnestness startled them all. 'Certainly,' said Lady Delaunay, 'this instant, if you will; your request is too solemnly worded to admit of hesitation. Will you step into Lord Delaunay's study? We shall be there most secure from interruption.'

As she moved to lead the way, Miss Conway, who had listened with a changing countenance hurriedly interposed. 'Why all this mystery? Why may we not be present? What can that dear lost friend have

wished to be said that *I* was not to hear; *I*, who was everything to her, and nursed her to the last, and whom she loved as her own child?

‘That, madam,’ said Henry, calmly, ‘you will hear from Lady Delaunay as soon as she thinks fit. My duty is simply with her, at present. I may have to trouble you afterwards, as well as Lady Adelaide, as there are circumstances to be mentioned, that are best done in the presence of both.’

‘You will oblige me, then,’ said Lady Delaunay, ‘if you will both wait here till I call you. I will not keep you in suspense longer than I can help.’ She was still moving to the door, when Miss Conway clung to her arm. ‘By all our long attachment, my dear aunt,’ she whispered, ‘do not listen to what envious detractors may say to you of me—do not let me be attacked in my absence—I know what enemies I have—in *that* family, especially.’

‘You do me injustice, Charlotte, by speaking like this. Why should you imagine you will be attacked, if your conscience is clear? I promise you there shall be no mysteries where I am concerned; and truth can never hurt those who have nothing to conceal. Stay!’ she said, suddenly, turning as she was about to leave the room, ‘before I leave you together, are you two friends?’

It was a question not easy to answer in a hurry. ‘Go, my dear mother,’ said Adelaide, with a half smile, ‘we shall be better able to tell you when we know ourselves.’

Her own heart was so lightened, and her conscience so free from dread, that notwithstanding the conviction so slowly and reluctantly forced upon her, that the

cousin on whom she had so confidently relied, had been more of an enemy than a friend ; as she looked now in her face, so terribly altered since they last met, and old habits, old associations, old memories crowded upon her thoughts, resentment and distrust melted into regretful pity ; and she would willingly have forgiven all the past, to have been able to believe and love her once more. But the gathering brow and whitening lip with which Miss Conway returned her gaze, told plainly that *she*, at least, was not disposed to forgive ; her excitement of mind completely overthrowing her ordinary suavity and self-restraint.

‘*Friends ?*’ she repeated, with emphatic bitterness ; ‘how can we meet as friends, when the first result of your presence is to alter her manner to me, and let in detractors and mischief-makers to poison her mind against me ? What is that relation of yours going to do ? I presume you are in his secrets, and I have a right to ask if I am in any way implicated.’

‘I know no more than this,’ replied Adelaide, firmly but mildly, ‘that whatever he does, he will do conscientiously, and like a gentleman.’

‘A lawyer’s conscience—we all know what that means, my dear. Whatever may serve his client, he will conscientiously do, no doubt. And so that you gain your own ends, what does it matter to you ?’

‘I have not deserved this language, Charlotte, and I have no wish to return it. If we cannot meet as friends, let me, at least, be spared the pain of insult.’

‘Whose fault is it that we are not friends ? Have I not stood yours, many and many a time, at great risk, and without reward ?’

‘I thought so once, and relied upon you—too long.’

I do not wish to reproach you—I have received too much mercy myself to accuse another; but the advice you gave me yesterday was so fearfully like that which first misled me so many years ago, that I tremble to think what I might have become, had your influence over me remained what it was.'

- 'Indeed? There is certainly a marked change in your disposition since I first, as you say, began to mislead you. There was a time when you would no more have crouched in the dust before your mother, as you have done and are doing every hour, than you would have begged for alms in the highway. My advice was sent to the high-spirited girl I remembered of old, not to the worldly-wise woman I find you to be. You seem to understand the nature you have to deal with, so far; and by allowing her to set her foot upon your neck, you have gained something; you are permitted to be dependent on her bounty, as long as you have no will but hers, and obey the lifting of her finger. How long will that be? Are you prepared for what is before you? Do you think when all this first feeling is over, either of you can forget the past? Will not everything remind you of it? Does not every friend, every servant, know you are received back as an undeserved favour? Can you ever cross the hall without remembering *how* you crossed it once? Or if *you* would gladly forget, will *she*? Never, and you know it. She may formally accuse herself of having been harsh, she may gratify her own generosity by freeing you from debt—but of her own love of power and domination, she will not concede a hair's-breadth; and the more you bow to the yoke, the heavier will it become.'

Lady Adelaide's head drooped, and her eyes rested on the floor. She knew the picture to be overdrawn, and yet it struck her too forcibly for a reply. Miss Conway paused to listen a moment; walked to and fro in fierce impatience, and then stopped to relieve herself by another thrust.

'Of course, directly she came back from Cannymoor, I could see there was a change—I was prepared for it; and little time as there has been for conversation since her return from France, her manner plainly shows she is altered towards me. She says there are points that require explanation—I know what that means; I shall be called to account for all I have tried to do for you; and no one will remember what I have gone through, how I have filled up the place her rebellious daughter left empty, watching over her as if she had been my own mother, and trying to save her from wretchedness whenever I could. No, it will be said I kept you apart; I am prepared for that. There is one, who to injure me, will say anything. I can tell her, and I will, that had you met before, such was your disposition, you would soon have quarrelled again—as you would now in a month, were it not that you have lost every spark of spirit you once had, and are content, if you may not sit at the table, to stoop to gather the crumbs!'

Again she stopped to listen; again paced the length of the apartment with restless steps; and again turned upon Adelaide, as she stood silent and thoughtful, attempting neither defence nor retort.

'One thing more. I know whose influence is at work—has been, for some time, in more ways than one. I know who travelled up with you to town, and to whom

you are beholden for your expenses on the road ; not the first time, if my informant spoke truth, that his purse had been at your disposal. Times are changed with you indeed, if this be so ; but the purse, as I remember it, used not to be so well worth accepting. I see I am offending you, and yet speak I must. He knows that I know *him*, and as his object will be to throw discredit on my evidence, *I* know what to expect as soon as he appears. Hear me, therefore, while you can, and disbelieve me if you dare. Sooner or later—it may be years first, it may then be only by degrees, but it must in time—the revelation of what he is will break upon you—the depths of that cold base selfishness that will trample over the ruins of a lifetime, sooner than forego a gratification—the deliberate cruelty, that can see tears of blood wrung out by the agony it has caused, and yet remain callous and relentless still ! Yes, the flame that he braved, the sea from which he escaped so narrowly, were a milder fate than the doom of being linked to a heart more cruel than the fire, more remorseless than the wave ! When that day comes, remember at least you were warned—though the warning was unthanked, and in vain !’

She stopped suddenly, as if she heard something—hurried to the door, and, after a moment’s hesitation, out of the room.

Adelaide raised her head when she was left alone, and looked round at the well-remembered room and pictures ; every piece of furniture the same as she had so often seen it in her mind’s vision ; the pattern of the carpet, the bronzes on the mantelpiece, every outline, every tint so familiar, and yet so strange to her eye—reminding her that she was once more at home. Was

not the wish of her heart given to her; as her poor friend had prayed it might be; and ought she not to be happy? But if those bitter words proved true, would her punishment be over?

‘It is true, and I cannot deny it,’ she thought; ‘and she knew I could not. I *am* here on sufferance, and through undeserved mercy; I have forfeited my birth-right; my boy and I must wait as pensioners on her bounty and love, for even the liberty of self-maintenance is no longer mine. She can forgive, but never forget or blot out the past; and if I grow restless and impatient, and offend her again—oh, my ungrateful, distrustful heart! Is not all this beyond what I deserve, beyond what I once dared to hope? Shall I not, with the blessing, accept *the lowest room*, knowing that I have one compensating gift that outweighs all I lost—my own precious boy, whose sweet face has done more to win their hearts than anything else in the world could have done? But what can be the reason of Charlotte’s insulting language? How have I deserved that she should treat me so, and why on that one subject is she so bitter, so unjust? *He* cold-hearted—selfish—indifferent to the sufferings of others? I were ungrateful indeed to think so for a moment. Is it possible? Yes, it must be so. I have all this time been looked upon as a rival; this explains all. Why did it never occur to me before?’

‘Adelaide!’

It was her mother’s voice, hasty and imperative. She obeyed the summons immediately. Lady Delaunay had the study door open in her hand, and was beckoning to her with an impatience very unlike her usual manner. As Adelaide entered, the first object she saw was

Charlotte Conway, her face dark with conflicting passions, her hands tightly clenching some papers she seemed to have crumpled up in a burst of indignation, her eyes gleaming resentment and rage, mixed with confusion. Henry, his keen features bright with the energy of battle, stood by the table, cool and collected as usual; but Lady Delaunay's gesture, as she closed the door, and turned to her daughter, was so stern, that innocent as she felt of any unacknowledged offence, Adelaide trembled as she looked.

'My dearest mother, what is it? What have I done?'

'Adelaide! I am going to ask you some questions; and as you value my love—my blessing—my confidence—so lately restored, answer me truly, without hesitation, or fear of the consequences. Your cousin denies the truth of all other evidence, so I am compelled to appeal to yours. Was she, or was she not, by her aid and advice, a party to your marriage?'

The eye, the tone, admitted of no delay; Adelaide could only reply, 'She was—but as it was done for me, I alone am to blame.'

'Did she, or did she not, lead you to believe that the regiment was ordered to India through *my* influence?'

'She did, indeed: we both believed it. Oh, mother!'

'Did she, or did she not, convey to you a message from me, so insulting towards your husband, that you were stung into writing me a letter, which I said should be the last I would receive? You alluded to it at Cannymoor, and I thought then there had been some mistake.'

'Oh, I have so hoped since that there had! Was I

then mistaken? You did not mean what I thought, my dear, dear mother? Why, did I not know it sooner?’

Lady Delaunay sat down by the table, and covered her face with her hands. Her last ray of hope was gone. Miss Conway folded her arms and knitted her brows in dogged defiance; her whole countenance so transformed from its ordinary expression as to be hardly recognisable. If her features had been cast in iron, they could not have shown less emotion. All further denial being unavailing, desperation conquered shame, and borrowed strength from rage and hate. Adelaide, however, was too anxious to think of her; she bent over her mother, and watched her struggles for composure, dreading a return of the attack she had witnessed once before. To her great relief, they proved successful. When Lady Delaunay raised her head, her austerity and firmness were restored.

‘A momentary weakness may be pardoned me,’ she said, ‘in losing for ever what I loved so well. Yes, Charlotte, you know how I have loved you—confided in you—relied upon you; I cannot dwell upon that; I only know, it was so startling a blow to have even a doubt cast upon your truth, that when it was first done I could not face it—nor would I allow a word to be repeated in your disparagement, till I had means and time to investigate, and do you justice. This is now given; I know enough to satisfy me of the rest, and my confidence is taken from you—for ever! Adelaide, my daughter, restored to me at last to compensate for all beside, give me your hand, look me in the face: will you believe what I am going to say? I knew his regiment *would* be ordered out—it was one reason for

my disapprobation—but I had no more to do with it than you had. Yes, it was a cruel falsehood, cruel to us both. You thought I sacrificed him, and therefore sacrificed yourself, poor child ! I see it now. But what will you say when I tell you that message was never sent at all ? I sent you one which I hoped would open a door of return ; asking for your confidence about the actual state of your husband's affairs, that I might, if possible, enable you to begin the world without a worse burden than inexperience, and show you the way to make me your friend. Receiving the answer I did, I vowed I would receive no more without being firmly convinced of your repentance and submission ; and the only link I would allow between us—I could not cast you off entirely—was the affection I believed to exist between you two, so that through her the first evidence would come to me of your being really changed—as I hoped and prayed so many years, and seemed to do all in vain.'

Lady Adelaide's changing face, as she listened, was a sufficient index of the astonishment she had no words to express. The first glow was of grateful joy, to find that the merciless judge, the inexorable minister of vengeance, whom she had so often despaired of softening—from first to last, had loved and mourned over her, and would have pardoned and saved her, if she could ! But as the real truth became gradually clear, and the magnitude of the injury was revealed—as she thought of her long fruitless efforts and disappointments, and saw now how they had all been baffled—her excitement became so powerful as well-nigh to overcome her fortitude. She flung her hands up for a moment, as one who sees a frightful vision ; then pressing them convulsively upon

her bosom, walked rapidly up and down the room, hardly aware of what she was doing. Her nature was too generous ever to have suspected anything worse than gradual estrangement on the part of her once intimate companion ; such deliberate, wilful enmity and treachery struck her with horror for their own wickedness, with anguish for having been their object so long, and with a burning sense of injury and wrong, that almost suffocated her. At the moment when her mother, alarmed by her agitation, was rising to soothe it, and Henry was endeavouring to open the window, Lord Delaunay came in. Adelaide uttered a half shriek, and rushing forwards, flung her arms round his neck.

‘Bertram ! Bertram ! Bertram ! It might all have been prevented, all have been remedied ! Oh, my God ! help me to forgive as I am forgiven ! But all these years—all this bitterness—and she might have saved me—and would not !’

And now the torrent gushed forth, as on that day at Cannymoor Rectory ; and struggle as she might to recover her breath, the sobs came faster and faster, till she was quite exhausted, and sat passively at last, supported by his arm, her pleading eyes stopping the half-spoken command to retire and rest that Lady Delaunay was inclined to enforce. Rest just then, before she knew all that was to be told, would, she felt, be out of the question ; and she waited anxiously for her brother to speak, seeing by his face, that he, too, had something to reveal. His first words, however, were to ask the meaning of all this ; and Henry Lyndon, in obedience to the Countess’s desire, at once explained.

He related in concise language the history of General Conway's papers, known to the reader already, as far as he himself knew it: the two missing packets he could account for on satisfactory evidence—that of the person who saw Miss Conway take them out of Mrs. Marsden's writing-case—Miss Brittan; and of the person who saw Miss Conway burn them—her late attendant, Mrs. Forrest. Of the third, he then proceeded to relate, that being requested about three weeks ago, to convey Lady Adelaide Lyndon's apology to Mrs. Marsden, for the unwarrantable use Mr. Spindler had made of her name, in intruding himself upon her society—he had done himself the honour of calling upon her, and been admitted to a long private conversation.

'It struck me at first,' he said, 'that she was altered, and that she seemed to have some difficulty in recollecting events and names; but after a time this passed off, and the questions she put gave me an opportunity of satisfying her mind, on several points that she owned she had been unable to understand. The next day I received a note, requesting me to call again. I did so, and found her, this time, in perfect possession of her faculties, and labouring under no small excitement of feeling; our conversation had recalled to her mind the packet of papers she had nearly forgotten, and finding Mr. Randolph's return uncertain, she had resolved on examining it thoroughly herself. It had been a great exertion of nerves and eyesight, but it had been accomplished, and all her anxiety now was to put it into safer keeping than her own. She told me then, she thought her time was short, and delivered me the packet, with a solemn injunction, in the event of

her death, to deliver it personally into the hands of Lady Delaunay, as soon as possible after the funeral. I promised I would, and I have kept my promise. The result has surpassed even my anticipations.'

He paused for a moment ; all eyes were rivetted by the animated earnestness of his manner—even those of Miss Conway ; though a slight convulsive twitching of her face was the only indication of her being moved by the recital.

'When I was last in this room,' he resumed, 'I was pleading Lady Adelaide's cause, almost hopelessly—so impenetrable seemed the barriers that fenced her from all she loved. I pleaded it then, on the ground of her punishment being heavier than her crime ; knowing as I did, how bitterly she suffered. On that occasion, I first became aware who was her real enemy in the matter, and from that time have done my best to counteract her influence. This hour recompenses everything. Lady Adelaide's happiness is now in the hands of her mother ; and I, and all who love and respect her—as every one who has known her conduct in adversity, and her patience in suffering, must and ever will—feel that whatever wrong we have done her, will be atoned, and whatever wish we have formed for her, will be more than fulfilled.'

The cordial grasp of the Earl's extended hand was sufficient proof how heartily he appreciated and sympathized with him ; but before he could answer, Miss Conway haughtily rose.

'I was unwilling to interrupt the flow of Mr. Lyndon's eloquence,' she said ; 'but I think I have borne nearly enough for the present. I was quite prepared to meet with injustice as soon as a certain influence had time

to work ; but now that I find there has been so much underhand intrigue going on, that a silly girl whom we know to have neither sense nor principle, and a maid I discharged for insolence, are quoted as authorities for what I have done, or not done—I can only smile at the affront, and wonder my aunt should condescend to avail herself of such instruments. I scorn to enter into explanations : if my private correspondence is to be handed about from one to another, garbled and perverted to suit the views of those interested in my detraction—if everything I do or say, or have not done or said, is to be watched, commented upon, and misrepresented—I feel the sooner I am out of everybody's way the better ; and if Lord Delaunay will extend his courtesy sufficiently to lend me the carriage, which I see is still at the door, I am quite sure Mrs. Knighton will kindly allow me the shelter of her house. There is one thing more I would observe. With regard to the opinion of my late beloved friend and relative, however her easy nature may have been perplexed and harassed by the whisperers who stole in upon her whenever my back was turned, and whose suggestions troubled even her dying hours, I do not for a moment believe she expected or wished me to be treated like this ! I believe, on the contrary, she has left convincing proof behind her of the esteem in which she held my character and affection ; and that Lord Delaunay, anxious as he may be to delay the acknowledgment, has that proof with him at this moment !

‘Is this the case, Delaunay ?’ asked his mother, gravely ; seeing him hesitate, and his colour rise, as if he certainly had something that he was reluctant to tell.

‘Something very like it,’ said he, with a shake of the head, and he put a letter into her hand. ‘Gower, her solicitor, gave me that; it is, as you see, addressed to us both, and he had charge of it with the will.’

Lady Delaunay unfolded the paper with a trembling hand, and her eyes grew dim at the sight of the large, straggling writing—the last that feeble hand had ever penned.

‘I may not live to see you again, dearest Mary, and my dear cousin Delaunay, but I hope you will not refuse to execute my will. I think I have carried out the General’s wishes—he would never have encouraged disobedience or rebellion; but what can a poor girl do to atone for a fault, but repent and amend? She has had much wrong, and a great deal of sorrow, and I feel sure when you know all, you will think I have only done justice. Give her my love and blessing, and tell her my last prayer is, that she may make as good use of prosperity as she has of trouble. God bless you all! J. M.’

Miss Conway, who had listened, as if stiffening into stone, now broke in with the scarcely intelligible question, ‘And the will?’

‘There are *two* wills,’ said Lord Delaunay; ‘one dated some two or three years—and the other a fortnight ago. The contents of the first I conclude you know already; it was in your favour—the other bequeaths everything, after payment of sundry legacies—to Adelaide.’

She was silent for a moment, as if stunned; and so livid grew her face, that both gentlemen simultaneously

stepped forward to offer her support. The next instant, however, she had recovered her strength, and then the full tide of disappointment and fury came rolling too fiercely and too fast for any ordinary restraint; and the outward control that education, refinement, and regard for the opinion of the world, exercise over evil passions even where principle is not at work to root them out, proving inadequate to this unexpected assault, a torrent of violence and invective, discharging all the pent-up bitterness concealed so long, poured forth unchecked—such as bowed Adelaide's head as if the shame had been her own, and left Lady Delaunay's cheeks as white as her hair. Tenderness, respect, gratitude, were all forgotten; as if a fiend prompted her tongue, she taunted them all wherever she knew them to be most sensitive; till at last, when all other sarcasm seemed to fail, it came to a bitter derision on Delaunay's courage and manly honour, who had been beholden for his life in the water to the man he durst not encounter by land!

The Earl broke from his sister's clinging hold, and strode up to the infuriated woman with an eye that flashed as keenly as her own.

'You have said a thing now that you can never recal. While I could believe that your slander of a gallant gentleman arose from error of judgment or misunderstanding, I screened you like a brother from the consequences; but an insult like this I will bear from no living creature under heaven, were she ten times my cousin; and out of this house to-day, either you will depart—or I!'

She wrapped her cloak round her, and moved towards the door.

‘I am quite ready—I told you so before—to go this instant. I am not friendless—not quite yet. You will allow me the use of your carriage as far as Mrs. Knighton’s—perhaps you will be good enough to order my trunks to be sent to me there? Thank you—then now—’

But Adelaide, who had not believed her at first to be in earnest, started up, and threw herself between her cousin and the door.

‘Not thus—not now!’ she said, extending her hands to bar her passage; ‘Charlotte, by all her love—all her goodness—all her tender care—leave her not in anger! It will be a blight on your whole future life; it will darken your last hour. Pause while it is not yet too late—unsay those wild and bitter words that you could not mean, and we will all forget they were ever said. Listen for one moment—if you think you have been wronged, there is nothing I am not ready to do to satisfy you—whatever is mine you shall share—but do not let it come to this, with all this misery to be gone through over again! Oh mother, dearest mother! speak to her—she is blinded by passion, she does not know what is before her—and I *do*!’

Miss Conway involuntarily gave one glance at the friend she was losing for ever, whose stern, sorrowful gaze as it met hers, was like the last farewell of her better angel. A momentary struggle was visible in her inflamed and quivering features, and then their scornful hardness returned. She caught Adelaide’s hand in hers, wrung it twice with fierce energy, and then flung it from her.

‘Thus I thank you for your forgiveness—thus for your generosity—and thus, I reject them both! You

have robbed me of everything I ever cared for in the world, and now that you think you can triumph over my fall—though it remains to be seen whether your triumph be as secure as it seems—you hope to humble me by benefits, and put to my lips the cup of humiliation that you have had to drain to the very dregs ! My nature is not like yours. I neither steal out of this house in secret, nor shall I ever ask or wish to set foot within its walls again !'

She passed from the room without looking back. They heard her coolly giving her orders to the servants as if she had been going out for a customary drive, and then the hall door closed heavily behind her—and she was gone, as she had truly said, never more to return.

CHAPTER XVI.

Lay thy sweet hands in mine—and trust in me !

TENNYSON.

LORD DELAUNAY had seen Mr. Randolph, as he attended Mrs. Marsden's funeral ; and in the hurried interview afterwards, which was all that time admitted, there was sufficient warmth and cordiality to show that all traces of misunderstanding were removed. A few days afterwards he called by the Countess's own appointment, and was received by her, as before, alone in her private sitting-room. Each thought the other altered since their last conversation there ; for Maurice still walked lame, and the anxiety of his mind kept his spirits in a perpetual fret, that prevented his recovering his full vigour as fast as he wished ; and Lady Delaunay, in her deep mourning, looked very much aged by recent events, and her face, though softened in its expression, was ploughed with many new lines of care. No wonder that it should, when every day, almost every hour, was revealing some new discovery of deceit and wrong ; such as it required all the comfort of her daughter's restoration and presence to help her to bear. It would take them long, very long, to unravel all that had been so skilfully tangled in the past—and but

for the treasure she had found, the thought of that which she had not only lost, but knew now that she had only dreamed of possessing, would have left such a blank in Lady Delaunay's heart, as even her high-toned fortitude might have found too terrible to endure. Randolph knew how much she must have suffered, and it deepened the emotion with which he bowed over the hands that clasped his so warmly, and received her blessing—more solemn and heartfelt even than that with which she had bade him farewell.

‘I little thought what services you were to render me before I saw you again, Mr. Randolph. My son has been looking forward to the time when he could ask your forgiveness and friendship : and indeed, if you will not accept the one, we can have little comfort in the other. My daughter found you a friend indeed when she most wanted one : she must thank you herself ; we were little aware of what she was doomed to undergo, and which she would never have borne so well but for your kindness and care.’

He stammered something about his hope that she had recovered—that the accident and exposure to weather had not produced any serious effect—that Walter was progressing, and so on—trying hard to put questions of ordinary politeness, and feeling every moment less and less able to understand what he was saying. She kindly turned the subject to more general matters ; talked about his journey, his convalescence, and his French friends ; and when these failed, helped him out with topics of common-place conversation, without seeming to notice how wide some of his answers were from the mark ; and by the time they had run through the general subjects of the day, he had begun to recover

some of his presence of mind and nerve. Then there came a pause, and a short silence, that gave him time to lose then again.

‘Do you remember, Mr. Randolph,’ said Lady Delaunay, presently, in a voice slightly tremulous, ‘a conversation we had the last time you were in this room?’

‘Every word—every look, Lady Delaunay.’

‘I fear both words and looks disappointed you more than once. Have you heard the end of your poor *protégée’s* sad history?’

‘Yes—I understand she just lived to see her mother—no more.’

‘She did—the pardon came, but too late for either, and the mother has never recovered the blow. Had she listened to your pleading sooner, she would have spared herself this crowning grief. Do you remember how you told me that story—and why?’

He looked at her intently, but in silence.

‘Do you remember how I stopped you, when you were about to tell me something I would not, could not listen to then?’

‘Yes,’ he said, still keeping his eyes fixed upon her.

‘Is there anything now you wish to tell me, that you think it right I should know?’

The colour flew to his face: his heart beat so fast as almost to paralyse his utterance: he bent before her in a supplicating attitude.

‘Do not tempt me by too much condescension and kindness beyond my strength, or I shall speak what will be past my power or yours to recal, however we may both desire it.’

‘I owe you so much,’ she said, smiling, ‘I could not

easily be made to take offence. Remember, I am in your debt for a favour, and if you prefer to use the privilege of telling me some unpalatable truths, I can bear them. I have borne many lately, and tell myself as many more.'

'It will be an unpalatable truth, I feel, if it fails to give offence; but you urge me on, and I am powerless to resist. Hear my confession, and pardon it if you can. For years, Lady Delaunay—years that seem a lifetime to look back upon, I have loved your daughter; but I have never yet told her so. My conduct in the matter has been vilified, my motives misconstrued: it is now due to my honour that I should be allowed to speak openly for myself; and the impatience with which I have waited to do it, and which hurries me on now at this somewhat unseasonable time, you would pity, if you knew what it was to have borne hopelessness so long, and to have a ray of hope at last. I have never had reason to suppose my attachment returned; I am perfectly aware of her superiority in every way to myself; but an attachment that nothing has been able to shake, that everything has but served to strengthen, is the utmost a man can offer a woman, and I dare not despair till I know the worst. Lady Delaunay,' he continued, sinking on one knee before her, 'you gave me your blessing when we parted last, and its wings were those of a guardian angel in my hour of temptation and danger. If it was indeed more than a form of words, that passed your lips, but came not from your heart—renew it to me now, and once more bid me God speed where my all is at stake. Let me have your generous approval of what I do, and be the result what it may, I shall be better able to bear it.'

She trembled, but not with anger; her emotion would hardly let her speak.

‘Have you realized what a sacrifice you are asking of me? Not of ambition—not of pride—which in the light of another world appear differently to what they did once—but of happiness? I have only just recovered my lost treasure; her health, her spirits, want all that care and tenderness can do to restore their tone: we have years of sorrow to obliterate—we had just planned how we were to work henceforth in company; can I cheerfully give all this up to another? Can you ask it?’

‘If you tell me it would risk her health, or disturb her peace, I shall believe you, Lady Delaunay, and depart. I can say no more, do no more than that: human strength can be tasked no further. Tell me so plainly and seriously, and I will ask nothing—not even a blessing; it would avail me little. Only do not let me see her, for that I could not bear. It would be too cruel.’

He had risen, and stood before her in an attitude of dignified respect, waiting for her next words. Before they were spoken, the door was softly opened, and Lady Adelaide, not knowing that her mother was engaged, came in to let her know that Emma Lyndon was waiting to see her.

The pleasure she had just been enjoying in imparting all her present gladness, and future plans, to the friend whose affectionate sympathy had cheered her darkest hours, and was ready now to rejoice in her returning joy—had brightened the lustre of her eyes, and suffused her cheeks; and Randolph, with her last look of mortal agony still vividly fresh in his remembrance, was dazzled by the change. His first involuntary impulse

was to step forwards ; but checking himself, he stopped short with a low bow. Her surprise at finding him there was not diminished by the evident agitation in the countenances of both ; but she advanced instantly with a blushing smile, extending her hand so cordially, while expressing her grateful sense of his kindness, he had no choice but to grasp it ; and then did not know how to let it go again. He cast an imploring glance on Lady Delaunay. Her magnanimity could not withstand the appeal.

‘As you are here, my dear Adelaide, you can help me out of a little difficulty. I believe you have some accounts to settle with Mr. Randolph yourself ; will you undertake mine as well ?’ She took a small parcel out of a drawer. ‘This has involved me in a serious liability. It was always valuable—it has become by circumstances inestimably precious ; for it has passed through a treasury that stamps on it a value, not of this world. I have been called upon to pay a heavy price ; perhaps you may find my creditor more reasonable. At any rate, I leave it in your hands, while I go and talk to my kind little nurse. I shall abide by your arbitration, let it cost me what it may.’

She put her hand on her daughter’s shoulder, looked in her face with a penetrating, tender smile, dimmed by gathering tears ; and before she could ask her meaning, left them together.

Trembling, she knew not why, Lady Adelaide sat down and opened the sealed packet. The colour flitted to her temples, as she recognised the lace ; and she looked up at Randolph, who was standing before her, leaning on a chair, as he had done that night they met at Cannymoor.

‘Oh, Lady Adelaide!’ he said, in a soft and pleading voice, strangely in contrast with his manner *then*, ‘has restored prosperity made you merciful? Can you bear to hear of presumption, of arrogance, of futile attempts to bring you under obligation—of proud, self-complacent dreams of a time when you should owe your happiness to me, whether that thought embittered it, or not—dreams that have passed away in failure and defeat, reducing me to throw myself on your generosity, and ask for pardon as an unmerited gift? Yes, that lace is a witness of one of my presumptuous attempts in your service; I led your mother on unawares till she knew the whole of the story connected with it, hoping it might lead her to a softened frame of mind towards *you*. I have always clung to the belief that it did; the dying prayer of the poor woman you saved has in your own case been granted; I see you now as I have yearned to see you—in your own sphere—among your own kindred—loved, cherished, and honoured—without the bitter drawback of owing it to me. And I rejoice from my soul—I always *shall* rejoice at that, whatever fate may be reserved for *me*. But can you, in the calm of your own happiness and peace, pity one, whose exile has been longer, whose estrangement more hopeless, whose yearning for reconciliation more intense, whose grief for past errors more poignant than your own? If you can, give me but one pardoning look or sign, and it will strengthen me to tell you all—all that I must tell, and you cannot refuse to hear, in justice to yourself and me.’

She had bowed her face till now; when she slowly raised her eyes to his impassioned countenance.

‘I did think, Mr. Randolph, that I had forfeited your

esteem, and the pain was so much heightened by consciousness of undeserving, I can hardly feel it a matter for forgiveness. If you in turn can forgive me all the grief I have caused you—most unwittingly—you will relieve my gratitude of half its weight; and we will mutually agree to blot out the past.'

'Blot out the past?' he said, earnestly; 'can I do so, even at your bidding? Can I forget what you were to me, what you always have been—so unutterably dear, even when I resented your conduct most, that nothing the world could offer would tempt me to part with your image in my soul, whether it haunted me to goad or to cheer? Yes, if I had won you *then*, I might wish that remembrance blotted out, for its record would have been my shame; but as you always were, always will be, the sole object I ever loved with my whole heart and being, that heart and being must cease to exist before the chain of association is broken. Now you know the utmost,' he continued, as he sank before her, and ventured to take the hand that rested on her knee, between both his own; 'let it be esteemed presumption if you will—remind me, as you did once, of the distance between us—I admit it all, I feel it all; and yet I am daring enough to believe, that in the devotion I offer you, the single-hearted, tried, unflinching attachment which, in spite of us both, you have implanted too deeply for human power to root out—there is value enough to be not unworthy the acceptance even of the noblest—even of you!'

She did not withdraw her hand, but her head drooped on her bosom, as if one bitter remembrance weighed it down, beyond the power even of his passion to raise.

‘Why,’ she said, at last, ‘did you ever misjudge me? Why did you withdraw your esteem, without knowing whether it was justly lost? Oh, if you really loved me, was it generous to leave me as you did, exposed to the scorn of my companion, and the perpetual reproaches of my own terrified heart? Mr. Randolph, I soon learned to regret bitterly the hasty words I used, and never again allowed a breath to sully the image of stainless honour which you always bore in my remembrance; but you acted, unknowingly, so cruel a part to one who had looked up to you as a brother and guide, that it has taken years of trial and sorrow to undo the evil; for in losing your esteem, I lost my own, and with it, my strength against temptation; and then—’

‘Oh, hear me!’ he said, breaking in on the faltering accents that pierced him to the soul; ‘you do not know all, but I do. My esteem? It was yours at that moment, as fully, as unreservedly, as if you had been indeed the angel you seemed; but an evil genius stood between us then, as she has done between you and happiness all your life, and her false tongue it was that made you believe a lie. She knew that in what she said, she should separate our hearts, as far as human power could, for ever. She very nearly succeeded; years of bitterness and misunderstanding have borne witness to her triumph, but the truth has appeared at last. Oh! forgive my share in the error, for the sake of my share in the grief!’

It was some little time before she realized what he was saying; when she understood the real state of the case, this last revelation of perfidy nearly overpowered her. She was, in fact, no match for her enemy, every

stroke went so deep ; it was not the injury alone she felt, with all its train of wrong—but the hatred that directed it—the ingenious, sleepless, unrelenting enmity that had pursued her steps so long, and whose shadow darkened over her still—giving her one new trial in the room of those just removed, in the difficulty, continually returning, of practising the grace of true forgiveness.

And yet, even then—as the mystery of the whole past became clear, there was something so strangely sad in the thought of that wasted miserable heart—disappointed of the passionate hopes, that might have redeemed its whole career—and heaping wretchedness on itself, in the insatiable pursuit of revenge—that resentment melted into pity, and her first words were to plead in her behalf. He was ready to listen to anything, when his own pleading had been heard, but as yet he had won no answer, and without it, he could not rest.

‘How shall I find words to convince you?’ she said, as he pressed her for a reply ; ‘how set before you a truth, which, if you do not see *now*, you may, when it is too late? You have given me your all—what could I give you in return? I am not what you knew me once ; the hard highway of life has worn me down ; youth has passed from me in trials, many of my own causing, mostly well-deserved—and they do not leave us the same as they found us. Kindness and affection have lightened my burden, and released me from poverty and dependence ; but it will be long, if ever, before the effect of the weight can be removed. And you, with all your gifts, your energies, your high qualifications, you have a career before you of so much usefulness and honour—that career that was our dream in early

days, and which you have thrown away so long, because the image you set up proved to be clay instead of gold—now that it has been thrown down, defaced and broken, would you waste your worship on it, and suffer it to impede you still? Maurice,' she continued with an increasing agitation that betrayed the effort it cost her—'Maurice, my friend once more—for your own sake I entreat you to rise above this weakness; you are reserved for a happier fate. Let me not see your whole life wasted, and have it ever on my conscience to bear the thought of what you might—what you would have been, if we had never met!'

'Do you know what I should have been, that you tell me this? Do you know what I should be without the thought of *you*? That one affection, embittered as it was, disguised even from myself as it was, has been my safeguard in temptations that have shipwrecked thousands. It is my better, nobler self; when I listen to its voice, the evil within me stands rebuked. If I have wasted my life and my gifts, it has been from misusing that glorious light within, and darkening it with my own stern passions. You tell me you are not what you were; can I not see that for myself? You have gone through the battle, and come off with the soldier's scars, but also with the victor's crown. Sorrow has only brought out the graces that prosperity might have stifled or veiled. If I loved the gracious emanation that once seemed to be beyond the touch of care, how much more the heroic wife and mother, who braved perils that daunted the bravery of man—the angel of mercy, who out of her poverty found a home for the outcast—the noble-minded woman, who had magnanimity enough to see her past errors, and humility

enough to acknowledge and atone for them ! As the Earl's daughter, or the soldier's widow, to me you are still the same Adelaide Chester, with every grand quality whose germ I once watched with pride, developed, matured, sanctified by suffering ; and to that Adelaide Chester I make my last appeal. Can you trust your happiness to my care ?—can you try and believe in the power of devoted affection to restore the spirit so hardly bruised, and to keep all burdens henceforth from bowing it down ? Can you pardon all the past, and trust for the future, that future which to me will then only be too blest, let Heaven's gracious will have in store for us what it may ?'

'Ah, Maurice—trust you?—that were easy—but how can I trust myself ?'

His answer was on the hand, pressed to his lips and heart ; and such a vow as was breathed over it—the prize despaired of so long, yielded now beyond his hopes—is but seldom so passionately uttered, and was never more devotedly kept.

The domestic annalist, whose faithful chronicle we have hitherto so closely followed, even to the verge of prolixity, suddenly fails us here, and for such information as may be deemed necessary to complete the history, we must apply to collateral and more meagre sources ; or where these fail, have recourse to that inexhaustible museum, the imagination of the reader.

The consent of Lady Delaunay to the engagement between her daughter and Maurice Randolph, was given with all the cordiality necessary to satisfy Adelaide's feelings ; and which no one knew better how to throw into a sacrifice, where she felt it to be due.

He had won upon her from the first, and where she once respected and approved, it was not difficult to secure her warm regard. The Earl openly rejoiced in the event, as the noblest amends and recompense that could be made to a man he already admired, and soon learnt to lean upon and trust; and Randolph's energy and decision, as they became more intimate, had a marked influence in strengthening the higher points of his kind, but vacillating nature.

At Cannymoor, the sympathy that had been already strongly excited by Lady Adelaide's grief, took fire at the news of her improved prospects. The popular feeling against Mr. Spindler, for his unmanly persecution, rose so high, as to lead to a solemn decree banishing him from society; Sergeant Wade was strongly suspected of instigating the boys to pelt him if he came, and Miss Chatterley quarrelled with him by letter so sharply, it ended in his giving her notice to quit, and her taking refuge with Mrs. Grayling. Mr. Ousel made no secret of the fact that he knew a great deal to the gentleman's discredit, which only regard for his cousin induced him to conceal; and it was unanimously agreed by high and low, that let him come when he would, Cannymoor should be made too hot to hold him.

It was not destined, however, to be honoured with much more of his presence, at whatever temperature; nor was Lady Adelaide, notwithstanding all the sympathy and goodwill of kindred and friends, as yet out of the reach of such vexation and annoyance as persevering ingenuity could inflict. He had one offensive weapon left, and that he failed not to employ.

The estrangement between Miss Conway and her

father's relations could not fail to excite a considerable amount of curiosity and conjecture among all who knew them personally, as well as among those who liked to appear as if they did. Mrs. Knighton sedulously spread the report, and it was diligently circulated among all her acquaintances and friends, that dear Charlotte Conway had been shamefully treated ; that the Lyndons had poisoned the poor dear Countess's mind when she met with that sad accident in the country (from which she had never quite recovered) ; that they had, by their insinuations and perversions of truth, brought Mrs. Marsden to make a new will, in defiance of all justice and past promises ; and that Lady Delaunay, under her daughter's influence, had behaved so harshly to Charlotte, it was impossible for her to remain in her house. It was altogether a great deal too bad ; but everybody knew what those Chester tempers were, and the most charitably sanguine hesitated not to prophesy, that they would all quarrel again before the year was out. Meanwhile, a strong demonstration was made in favour of the ill-used victim of intrigue and misrepresentation ; and if invitations for indefinite periods, and energetic declamations on her wrongs, could have consoled her for the loss of all her cherished hopes, Miss Conway received enough to satisfy the most insatiate after sympathy. But she knew too much of the world, and of her pleasant kinswoman in particular, not to be well aware, this would only last while the novelty lasted ; and the prospect of dreary dependence before her, without a single hope to brighten the future, was enough to appal a stouter heart than hers—courageous only under the stimulus of pride and passion ; but cowardly by nature, as deceivers always

are. The loss of Mrs. Marsden's fortune, on which she had so confidently relied, to compensate for every other, was a crushing blow from which she could not recover; the small legacy left her in the new will seemed only an aggravation of the disappointment, and she brooded over her own want of vigilance in leaving her so many hours unguarded, with a bitter self-reproach, that gave her no rest night or day. In one of her gloomiest moods—the report of Adelaide's engagement had just been brought in, and freely discussed—she received a visit from Mr. Spindler. She had always treated him with marked civility, 'as Adelaide's friend,' in the belief that nothing would so effectually disgust Lady Delaunay with her daughter's connexions, as such a specimen of Cannymoor society; but in using him as an instrument, she had not been aware how far she had laid herself open to a penetration as keensighted as her own. That peculiar gift, which he lost no opportunity of exercising—of finding out all the private family politics of everybody over whom he wished to obtain an influence, especially those things that they were most anxious to keep secret—had enabled him to discover her weaker side, and make his assault accordingly. He offered her wealth, independence, and revenge, in one—with his hand in marriage.

And against this offer she had nothing to oppose, but that she despised his low extraction, had no opinion of his principles, and considered his person and manners equally objectionable—cogent reasons enough, but not equal to those they had to conquer. The satisfaction of galling the Delaunay pride by such a connexion, the dread of poverty and insignificance, the desperation of disappointment, defeat, and shame, making her

reckless of the good opinion she had so long struggled to retain at all hazards, all helped to consummate the transaction. Mrs. Knighton, a little startled at first, on cool reflection, gave it her decided approval. Dear Charlotte might have been an awkwardly expensive charge in time, and involved her and the girls in some unpleasant difficulties. Now, she would be independent and settled, and if the old gentleman's manners were not quite the thing, it would all be set down to 'eccentricity'; his fortune, judiciously, not too ostentatiously managed, with a lady at the head of his house possessing so much tact and *savoir faire*, would soon remove all disagreeable first impressions; the money made all the difference; she had known men quite as vulgar received in the very highest society. On the whole, she did not see how she could have been justified in refusing such an establishment.

Her former friends made several efforts to rescue her from her impending destiny. Mr. Powys forced his way into her presence in spite of denials, and set before her, in the plainest terms, the character of the man to whom she was selling herself—of which he knew more than most, for in his youth he had been well acquainted with the heads of the firm under which Mr. Spindler's career began, and remembered disgraceful circumstances, which, though out of compassion they had never been made public, had led to his dismissal from their employment. With the earnestness of an old friend, who felt it to be his last opportunity, he pleaded with her to pause while it was yet time; he produced a letter from Lady Adelaide, offering to make any sacrifice required, to save her cousin from a doom of which she could best estimate the horrors; he told

her how Lady Delaunay mourned over her sin, and was only waiting for a sign of repentance to forgive and call her back ; he wrestled with her conscience till he brought her to tears, but all in vain. She trembled, she wept, she owned she was utterly wretched, and had been for years—thanked him for his goodness, but begged him not to see her again ;—her mind was made up, and even if she could, she durst not now repent.

Her marriage took place at the end of June, and the first intimation of the footing on which their new connexion proposed to stand towards Lord Delaunay's family, was in the announcement of an action, brought by Mr. Spindler against the executors of the late Mrs. Marsden, to set aside her last will, on the plea of her being incapable at the time it was made.

How much pain and annoyance might ultimately have been caused by his proceeding, could only be imagined by the opening ; as, before it had gone further than to give Captain Chester occasion to congratulate his relations on their going to law, with that cool dog Lyndon on their side—an unexpected circumstance caused another change of affairs.

Mr. Lyndon, though relieved from his pressing difficulties, and cordially rejoicing in his daughter-in-law's brightening future, looking upon her union with Maurice Randolph as making a welcome addition to his own family, had not recovered his spirits or serenity, and there was still cause for much anxiety respecting his health ; when news came from Australia of the discovery of gold, and those who had held shares in property that had hitherto appeared valueless, suddenly found themselves realizing money in a surprisingly agreeable manner. The Squire of Cannymoor was

among these fortunate persons, as he had sunk a considerable sum, of which everybody had despaired for him, though he never would own it himself. Perhaps it would have been impossible to devise any method of restoring his falling fortunes, that would have gratified him so much. His judgment was cleared—his prognostications were fulfilled—he was justified in what he had undertaken, and he had a triumph over Spindler beyond his hopes. Spindler had sneered at his expectations—had prophesied that Australian investments would never come to anything—had sold out his own, long ago, at a loss, and had always pooh-poohed everything he had said on the subject. What would the old scoundrel say now? His own affairs improved from that day; for the individual whose surety he had been, shared the tide of prosperity, and justified his good opinion by repaying all he had owed out of his first golden harvest; so that Mr. Lyndon had the satisfaction of clearing off every incumbrance, and standing a free man in the home he had so nearly lost.

On Mr. Spindler, the effect of all this was proportionably the reverse. He could not forgive himself. To lose money was everybody's lot—but to have missed an opportunity of making it, was an unpardonable error; and he so fretted and raged over what he might have made, and what others were making, that he was seized with an attack of illness, which ended in a paralytic stroke, shattering all his powers of mind, as well as of body. The result of this was to throw him completely into the hands of his wife, who had by this time become so thoroughly disgusted with his method of waging war, that her first use of power was to stop all proceedings about the will; her second, to make

him dispose of all his property at Cannymoor, and elsewhere ; and her third, to carry him away with her to Paris, where they took up their permanent residence ; and where her tyranny over him in his impotence was only to be equalled by the mortification his peevish vulgarity perpetually inflicted upon her. Each had gained one object of ambition, and to its enjoyment we leave them ; satisfied that the bitterest enmity could doom them to nothing more.

The Cannymoor property was purchased by Lady Adelaide in the name of her son, and Mr. Lyndon had the happiness of seeing the estate, to a considerable extent, restored to the old name. She paid a long visit to her former home, before her marriage ; and set on foot many of the plans she had been devising from the first moment of her prosperity. No one was omitted who had ever tried to show her a kindness ; the policeman at Lilford had ample reason to rejoice in the gentlemanly impulse, that had made him assist the pale lady in black that wet morning ; not satisfied with the liberal repayment of his loan, she assisted his family, and himself, in so many ways, that the proprietor of the postchaise, who never heard the last of his incivility, was fain to hide his diminished head for very envy and self-reproach. Every good neighbour received some graceful token of remembrance, appropriate and serviceable, as well as handsome : for her sisters she could not do enough ; some of their wildest wishes, which they had no idea she had ever noticed, were fulfilled to the uttermost ; and her gratitude to Dr. Home would have vented itself in a revolution of improvements and decorations of the Rectory, but for his sturdy resistance. He was persuaded, however, to own that the church was

not quite in that perfect condition, that defied ingenuity to detect a flaw ; Mr. Ousel's depressed spirits revived on being commissioned to select a new organ ; and though it was rather discouraging work to talk about ornament, where whitewash predominated, and pews were colossal, it was found that something might be done in painted lancet windows ; and Mr. Powys sent down designs and energetic counsel on the subject, sufficient for a cathedral.

One of these—the first put up—was a memorial.

There was a grand solemnity when Lady Adelaide laid the first stone of Mr. Randolph's new building, which had grown, from the original design, to one of considerable importance, and which he endowed with an annual stipend for master and mistress, and for the establishment and maintenance of a free library for the poor. On this occasion, Walter had a signal triumph, for his uncle, Lord Delaunay, came down at his special request, and delivered a popular lecture on natural philosophy, in the old school-room, to the boys and such adults as chose to be present ; when the whole mystery of the ice made by an air-pump was exhibited and explained ; whether it was understood or not, we cannot undertake to say, but it was received with unbounded admiration, and established Walter's scientific credit for ever.

When the golden October tinge was on the woods, Adelaide Lyndon became Maurice Randolph's wife.

Their united fortunes made them wealthy enough to have indulged in any extravagant display, had they been so disposed ; but such would have suited the tastes of neither. They lived as near Lady Delaunay as possible, until the Earl's marriage in the following

spring ; and then they persuaded her to live with them, and in all her undertakings of mercy, they were her able and diligent assistants. From her example, they learned that even riches might be accompanied by self-denial ; and their superfluity found ample scope in instructing the ignorant, helping the struggling, and saving the lost. Wherever they resided, in town or country, this was their luxury, their delight. Even the poor gipsy girl was found and rescued, and placed under Mrs. Dalton's care ; and Isabella Unwin was won to a strenuous effort after her lost self-respect, which in the end was crowned with success, and Lady Delaunay's restored regard.

Miss Brittan remained a year under Dr. Home's care, and then returned to that of the Countess. Her former idleness and folly had been so effectually cured, that it was her great ambition to fit herself for an independent situation ; and her benefactress gratified her wishes, by giving her every advantage that she could desire ; but when the time came for these accomplishments to be turned to account, it so happened that an energetic young curate of Mr. Powys's took it into his head that he could afford to marry on £150 per annum ; and as it was impossible to persuade him to the contrary by plain argument, the only thing left to do, before Lilla's bright eyes had cried over it more than a dozen times in one day, was to raise the income to as much again—which Lady Delaunay and Adelaide arranged between them ; both cherishing a regard for the individual whose folly had first brought them together, that made them ready to do anything sooner than she should be unhappy. Her notions about living in a clergyman's house having undergone considerable

change since she was first sent to one, she steadied down into as good and active a little parson's wife, as the lessons of experience had ever made out of such volatile materials.

Abner remained in Mr. Randolph's service, and proved one of the best grooms a master ever had, as long as he was allowed his own way. Ever and anon he had a craving for a change, and a holiday was never refused him ; but it generally turned out he had been down to Cannymoor, whence he one fine day brought a wife in the person of Mary Steadiman ; and from that time Colly said, she had no fears for him any longer, for Mary was a good lass, as knowed her Bible and her Catechism and if she just walked before him in the right way, he'd be like to follow.

That maxim, unconscious of the high authority whence it came, was Lady Adelaide's method of influence. She walked before her husband in the path of religion and usefulness which had been endeared to her in adversity ; and he followed because she led, and loved her the more, the more plainly he discovered whither she was leading. How he guarded, how he idolized her, may be left to the imagination. It was a love that so absorbed his whole being as to make those tremble that saw to what a slender prop he clung ; at times he would tremble himself, as her warning returned to his memory, and he saw how much Indian perils and mental anguish had done to sap her strength, and throw a delicacy over her cheek ; but still, no one could fail to see that it was midsummer with her heart : a fount of gladness which past memories could not poison, which past bereavements could not embitter, was ever springing

up within; affection, confidence, friendship—the daily improvement and ardent love of her boy,—an improvement in which Randolph took an unwearying part, and a love in which he won a place only second to her own—the devotion of her husband, the deep tenderness of her mother, and the consolations of faith and grace sanctifying all other blessings, made her noble nature expand in excellence, as a plant in a genial clime; never again, we hope, to be bowed down by care, or blighted by MISREPRESENTATION.

THE END.

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